POMPEY

SEASON 1985-1986

Mike Neasom, Photography Murray Sanders

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POMPEY

SEASON 1985-1986

Mike Neasom and Murray Sanders

The News
THE NEWS
SPORTS MAIL
FOOTBALL EDITION

PORTSMOUTH F.C.

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POMPEY

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POMPEY

Foreword by the Chairman of Portsmouth Football Club

It gives me considerable pleasure to write this foreword to the story of Pompey's season in 1985-1986.

My only regret that it is not the foreword to a story with a happy ending.

For so long it seemed it would be; for so long it seemed that our long wait for the return of First Division football to Fratton Park would finally end.

But it was not to be. No one was more disappointed that in the end we missed out so narrowly than myself, my wife, who shares my passion for the club, and my fellow directors.

I have known my share of disappointments in life, but I can think of nothing which approaches this.

But, if anything, it has merely served to strengthen my determination to succeed and achieve the ambition which has been with me since I first joined the Board of Portsmouth Football Club.

Yet, for all the final frustration, I still believe it was a season which held a great deal which was good, positive and enjoyable — and those moments are captured in this book.

Who will forget the drama of those three Milk Cup ties with Spurs, for instance; or the excitement of the F.A. Cup meetings with Aston Villa; or the tremendous run of home successes which marked the start of the season. As to why it all ended so sadly, it is difficult to find a single reason.

More, I believe, it was a combination of circumstances. Certainly we were extremely unlucky with injuries to key players at key times. The loss of Alan Knight with his broken hand contributed, but most of all, of course, were the midfield injuries at the end of the season.

To lose Micky Tait, Kevin Dillon and Gary Stanley at the same time, particularly after the transfer deadline had passed, was a cruel blow and one which, I believe, went a long way towards decreeing that we are still in the Second Division. In other respects, I think it was a season in which the club progressed considerably.

The acquisition of Moneyfields as a training ground was a major step forward and one which will benefit the club considerably in the years to come.

We also spent more than £350,000 on making Fratton Park a safer and better place to be and in the future will spend much the same kind of money to improve facilities for the supporters further.

Finally, I would like to end by thanking the supporters for their continued backing and ask them to swallow their disappointment as I have had to swallow mine, and keep believing in this club. We will get where we deserve to be — and I hope that next year's foreword will be to a book which tells a story with a happy ending.

B.J. Deacon, C.B.E.

POMPEY

1. Lightning

It could — and almost certainly should — have been the most glorious season in more than a quarter of a century for Pompey and their legion of fans, spread around the globe. This was the year when the First Division beckoned as it had not beckoned since that heady status was lost almost three decades and a generation earlier.

It had been agonizingly close the previous season — surely lightning could not strike twice? But it was to do so; and more stunningly than before. This was the cruellest blow Pompey's long suffering supporters had ever experienced.

In the end the margin was bigger than 12 months earlier — and to people viewing the cold statistical facts in the years to come, it will, perhaps, appear that to miss out by three points against goal-difference would have been easier to accept. Statistics will cloud the issue.

Twelve months earlier Pompey's presence at the threshold of the First Division on that fateful final Saturday was something of a surprise and owed everything to a surging unbeaten run through weather-scarred February, March and into April. Twelve months later it was to be different. Top from the publication of the first league tables in late August until early December, Alan Ball's side were racing certainties. By early November they were eight points clear of the field; they were unbeaten at home with seven straight wins and not a goal conceded; even November's point-lessness — it included the destruction of that record-breaking home run — could not totally erode their lead. And the month held the consolation of two goal-less Milk Cup draws with Tottenham's multi-million pound assortment of internationals.

Yet after November, despite the eclipse of Spurs at the third time of asking, and despite the gutsy F.A. Cup joust with Aston Villa, when the First Division legends needed a last gasp equalizer to force a replay and then extra time to win that, Pompey were never to strike consistent form.

From January to March, they were never to string more than two wins together. March promised that stability had returned with three wins and two draws in succession — but by then the transfer deadline had passed and that, possibly, was decisive. For cruelly the moment it had gone, Pompey suffered a hat trick of injuries — they lost Mick Tait, Kevin Dillon and Gary Stanley at the same time — midfield and its cover was wrecked and they never recovered. Although Dillon put his repairing cheekbone at risk during the last four matches, the damage had been done. Pompey took only seven points from their final seven matches — the span, significantly, of Tait's absence — and it was to destroy their dream.

In the end they needed Wimbledon to fold under the pressure of suddenly seeing an improbable prize so close — but the little London club, whose whirlwind tactics drew so much criticism, proved they had staying power by going unbeaten in their final 15 matches — runs like that deserve and earn glory. It was something Pompey were unable to match.

The reasons will be debated as long as Portsmouth Football Club exists; but no one will ever adequately find them. Perhaps too much was expected too early — yet it was the men of football management as much as anyone else who were convinced that this was to be Fratton's year. Perhaps the players' corporate nerve failed when the pressure was at its most intense; perhaps it was simply a case that over nine months and 42 matches, they were not quite good enough. What-ever, it was a year which promised so much and delivered so little — some supporters will possibly never recover. . .

POMPEY

2. Summer Days

The summer had been one of the quietest in years; after the frantic re-build of 12 months earlier, there was little activity. Neil Webb had gone; being passed on his way to Nottingham's City Ground by experienced full back Kenny Swain, a signing which was to prove inspired.

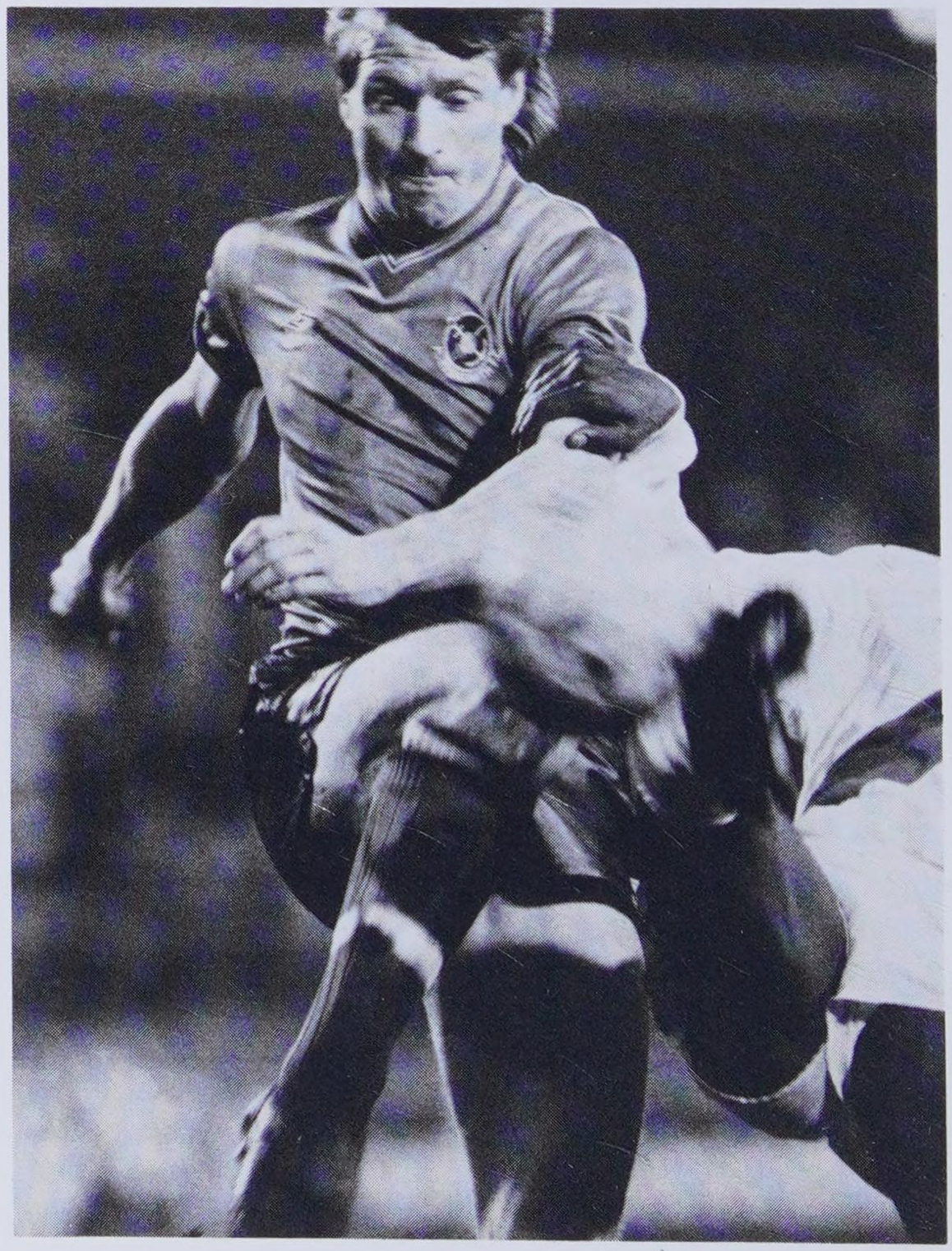
For the rest all was speculation and rumour as Alan Ball hunted the man to fill the vacancy which had existed since Mark Hateley's sale to A.C. Milan. But by the time the ritual of HMS Mercury and Clanfield's hills arrived for the players, the search had been unsuccessful. Pompey had been linked with a series of experienced strikers, the strongest with Peter Withe, but he had preferred Sheffield United's offer to Pompey's and so Swain was the only newcomer to sample Mercury for the first time — a painful sampling, too, since he cracked a bone in his hand in a heavy fall.

Local matches featured large in the pre-season schedule although there was a spicing of examination against League opposition. Some of that though was torpedoed by the frantic work of bringing Fratton up to the safety standards demanded after the Bradford tragedy. The Q.P.R. match was called off; those against Arsenal and Nottingham Forest went ahead with the South stand closed.

Matches began at Petersfield where an experimental side, including Richard Money, having his first outing for more than a year, drew 1-1 with a goal by Brendan O'Connell; then Bognor were beaten by Paul Wood's strike. That was to prove a significant evening though. Among the spectators was Mick Channon — could Alan Ball be thinking of recruiting his old Saints team mate as short-term cover for the striking vacancy? 'No,' Ball maintained. Two days later, though, and Channon arrived on a monthly contract. Before he did so, Pompey had won the Hampshire Professional Cup, Vince Hilaire's goal beating Bournemouth on an evening soured by a tackle which left Bournemouth's Robbie Savage with a broken leg and Mick Tait with an early bath.

Then came the tests against Forest and Arsenal; Forest won 3-1 with Neil Webb scoring one of their goals and Nicky Morgan signalling the shape of personal things to come by getting Pompey's in front of 4,000 fans. The Arsenal match was tighter. Some 5,625 watched Ian Allison earn the Londoners victory. So everything was geared for Hull and the first match — Pompey were 6-1 with the bookmakers for the title and on the eve of the match Alan Knight requested to come off the transfer list — and Pompey readily agreed.

Kenny Swain



POMPEY

3. August 1985

August 17
HULL CITY 2, POMPEY 2

Not the ideal fixture with which to open a new season — a visit to a side flushed with promotion fever is something few fancy on the first day of a new campaign. Yet the fixture-fixing computer's challenge was accepted by Pompey. The match saw their surprise and improbable recruit Mick Channon make his competitive debut — but they were without Kevin Dillon who was under carry-over suspension.

In the end there was considerable satisfaction about the performance which lifted them into the new season, if a little disappointment that there were not three points. For, inspired by Vince Hilaire's trickery on the wing, Pompey looked much the better side as they produced a solid all round display. Yet despite the promise of their start, Pompey still went behind after ten minutes when Noel Blake's clearance was charged down and Billy Askew's cross was nodded down by Billy Whitehurst for summer-signing Frankie Bunn to score from close range. Pompey were level though after 25 minutes as Mick Kennedy's shot deflected kindly to leave Nicky Morgan with a simple close range chance.

From that point Pompey ran the show and on the hour underlined their superiority with a spectacular goal. Morgan got in behind Hull's defence and pulled the ball back for Hilaire to volley home from the edge of the penalty area. But 15 minutes later Hull were level as Whitehurst beat everyone to Askew's near post corner and nodded home. But it was still a good point and an encouraging start to the attempt to go one better than the previous year.

Hull City: Norman, Jobson, Pearson, Swann, Skipper, McEwan, Williams, Bunn, Whitehurst, Askew, Roberts. Sub, Flounders.
Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Doyle, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire, Sub, Stanley.
Referee: Trevor Simpson (Ripponden).
Attendance: 8,221.

It set Pompey up for their first home match of the season — a meeting with relegated Sunderland under their new manager Lawrie McMenemy. And what a fiesta it turned out to be!

August 20
POMPEY 3, SUNDERLAND 0

Pompey produced a display of clinical finishing in the second half to sweep aside a big-name laden Sunderland side. The only mystery was why it took Ball's team until after the interval to turn their superiority into goals. They should have been ahead though but Kevin Dillon, their normally deadly penalty expert, was foiled by borrowed Eire international goalkeeper Seamus McDonagh. That chance came in the 20th minute when Mick Channon, looking sharper than at Hull on Saturday, was wrestled off the ball by Dave Bennett; but McDonagh went the right way and beat out Dillon's shot. But all the promise of Pompey's slick, high-speed football was fulfilled early in the second half with another magnificent goal from Hilaire. He controlled a clever pass from Kevin O'Callaghan, shielded it from Ian Wallace and turned to whip a shot into the top corner of the net.

Once the shackles had been broken Pompey began to express themselves freely, and threatened to over-run an increasingly depressed and shabby looking team. Their second goal came through McDonagh's error. Dillon let fly from long range and the keeper, who had out-thought him from the spot, allowed it to skip past his groping fingers and into the bottom corner. Ten minutes from the end Nicky Morgan, like Hilaire, made it two goals in two appearances. The centre-forward hurled himself full length to power home a header from Kenny Swain's cross. And that sent the crowd home happy and confident that things were looking very promising indeed.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 80), Hilaire.

Sunderland: McDonagh, Venison, Gray, Agboola, Bennett, Elliott, Pickering, Wallace, Swindlehurst, Gates, Walker. Sub, Daniel.
Referee: Colin Downey (Hounslow).
Attendance: 14,681.

That clean-sheet start at home was the lift-off to an impressive run with Pompey proving invincible and their defence impregnable at Fratton until mid-November. And the two-in-two start for Morgan was also the forerunner of an excellent run by the Londoner who had craved regular employment all his career.

Seamus McDonagh had an up and down night in Sunderland's goal - and this time to good purpose.

He flies to beat away a cross

He watches substitute Paul Wood charge in.

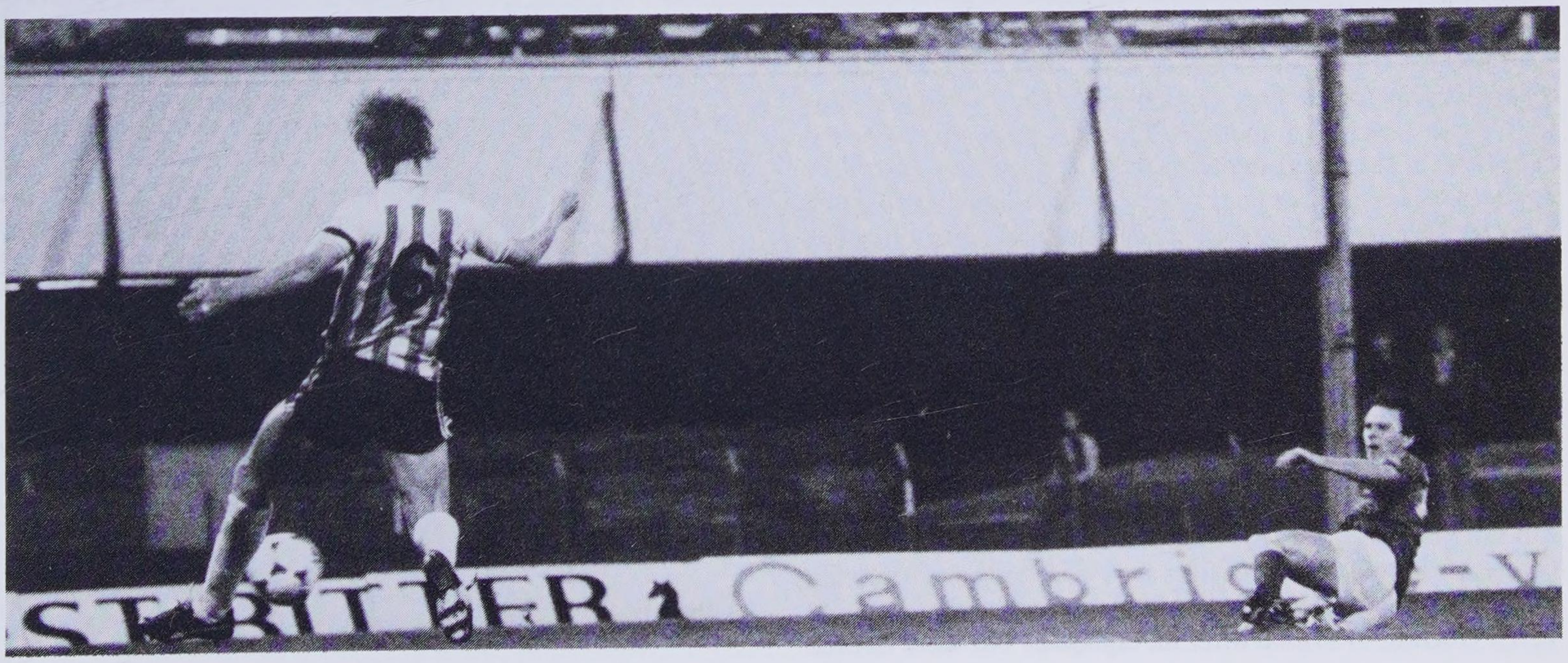
He's down, Wood's too late and the chance of the fourth Pompey goal is gone.

Five fly high - and there's not an open eye amongst them.

Not this time Kev.
Kevin O'Callaghan leaves Sunderland's Shaun Elliot behind, goes round Seamus McDonagh but goes too wide and Elliot gets back to block the shot.

OBB
PORTS

16
Wilson Hon


STARTER
Cambrid

August 24
POMPEY 4, CARLISLE 0

Bob Stokoe, the veteran manager who had performed miracles keeping Carlisle in the Second Division on a shoe-string, spoke the most elequent testament to this match. "We were outclassed, purely and simply outclassed. This game's all about players and man for man, Pompey had a better player in every position." Few who saw the destruction of his team would have argued. Alan Ball had called for a demonstration in one of the hallmarks of class — the ability to kill off a lesser opposition — and got it.

For an hour Pompey were on a different plane to their visitors and then, four goals up, they cruised to the final whistle as they conserved themselves for their Bank Holiday test at Huddersfield. They were given a great start; Nicky Morgan nodding Kevin Dillon's fourth minute corner back across goal for Vince Hilaire to keep up his goal-a-game start to the season. Twenty four minutes later and Morgan made in three-in-three as he nodded home Mick Channon's knockdown and shortly before the interval struck again when he forced home a loose ball after Kevin O'Callaghan's shot had been blocked.

That goal, like Morgan's first, had orginated from Mick Channon's pass and it was the 37-year-old's delicate through ball which opened up the chance for young Paul Hardyman to grab his first senior goal in the 53rd minute and persuade Pompey that it was time to freewheel the rest of the afternoon away.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire. Sub, Wood.
Carlisle: Carr, Haigh, McCartney, Ashurst, Baker, Bishop, Gavin, Mayes (Gorman), Entwhistle, Hill, Halpain.
Referee: Roger Gifford (Hengoed).
Attendance: 12,595.

August 27
HUDDERSFIELD 1, POMPEY 2

Pompey had provided a demonstration of one crucial quality on Saturday, their visit to Leeds Road, the scene of the last day frustration of the previous season, three nights later was to bring a showing of another. That was resilience. For the first time in the encouraging start to the season, Pompey's defence was to be thoroughly examined — and to pass the test. It was a magnificent contest, fought at a furious pace and with utter commitment by both sides.

No one was under closer examination than Alan Knight who had had a gentle introduction to the new season. Here, though, he was often in action but displayed faultless handling — and on one occasion had that little bit of luck all keepers need when he caught a shot between his knees and it stuck. Knight had made his first crucial save from Dale Tempest by the time they took lead in the 16th minute. Kevin Dillon's clever free kick got Vince Hilaire in behind the defence and his cross-cum-shot was deflected over the line by Joey Jones. Huddersfield, inspired by former Saint Terry Curran, swarmed after an equalizer but were denied by a resolute defence and Knight until the 67th minute when Curran drew the defence out of position and his cross left Tempest with a simple tap-in.

Ball had by then made the tactical switch he was to make so frequently during the season; withdrawing Channon after an hour and replacing his tiring experience with the youthful legs and pace of Paul Wood. The switch was to pay a handsome dividend in the 83rd minute when Wood nodded down Knight's long clearance and the suddenly deadly Nicky Morgan blasted a superb volley past a helpless Brian Cox to take Pompey two points clear of Blackburn at the top of the table.

Huddersfield: Cox, Brown, Bray, Doyle, Webster, Jones, Curran, Cork, Tempest, Wilson, Cowling. Sub, Raynor.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 61), Hilaire.
Referee: Ray Guy (Kirkby).
Attendance: 9,298.

While things were swinging on the pitch, they were also changing off it. Two days after Huddersfield had been beaten, Bobby Doyle was on his way from Fratton. Restricted to an appearance in the opening match as deputy for the suspended Kevin Dillon, Doyle had only an uncertain future with the club he had served so well in his near 200 appearances since Ball had sold him from Blackpool in 1980. Hull, impressed by Doyle's contribution to Pompey's opening day performance, came in with an offer of £30,000 and so for the second time, Ball sold the 31-year-old Scot.

While Doyle was going, Pompey also announced an arrival; chairman John Deacon surprised everyone by revealing that he had appointed Ron McMeakin, a Liverpudlian who had been working in America, as the club's promotions executive with overall responsibility for commercial matters for both football and basketball clubs. But it was to prove a short-lived appointment with McMeakin returning to the States within two months after failing to make an impact or impression. But it was the on-field promise which was exciting everyone — three wins and a draw in the first four matches; 11 goals scored and only three conceded. And the man at the centre of everyone's attention was Morgan. He had scored five goals in those first four matches — a run matched only by Colin Garwood in the club's history.

And now Norwich, the relegated Milk Cup holders were looming and a unique entry in Pompey's records awaited him — the first man to score in the first five matches of a Pompey season. That was his incentive; his partner also had one. For as the Norwich match preparation reached their peak, Mick Channon's status changed. He swapped his month-to-month contract for a season-long agreement. And Pompey's flying start to the season had impressed the money-men — their price for quitting the Second Division as champions was slashed to 5-2.

August 31
POMPEY 2, NORWICH CITY 0

This was Nicky Morgan's match — the match which earned him his special place in the club's statistical history. He needed to score once to give him the all time record of scoring in each of the club's first five matches — in fact he went one better and grabbed both goals.

In many respects it was Pompey's least commanding performance of the season so far and, in fact, Norwich played the more attractive football.
But Pompey had what Norwich lacked — a man riding a personal high in Morgan. The other bonus for manager Ball was the performance of his young namesake Kevin in the middle of the defence. The youngster was drafted in to partner Noel Blake when Billy Gilbert failed a pre-match fitness test, and, after an uncertain start, settled down to play with considerable effectiveness.

Morgan's history-making moment arrived in the 24th minute when a long cross by Kevin O'Callaghan caught the Norwich defence out of position and the centre-forward nipped in to beat Chris Woods for possession. It was a lead which survived dangerously at times, David Williams having two shots cleared off the line but with Alan Knight handling well and Blake assured, Norwich created little and then in the 82nd minute Pompey clinched victory. Paul Wood, who had again replaced Channon, won a vital header to knock down an O'Callaghan corner and Morgan did the rest — his seventh goal in five matches.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Ball, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 66), Hilaire.

Norwich: Woods, Haylock (Donowa), Spearing, Bruce, Phelan, Watson, Barham, Drinkell, Deehan, Mendham, Williams.
Referee: Darryl Reeves (Uxbridge).
Attendance: 15,504.

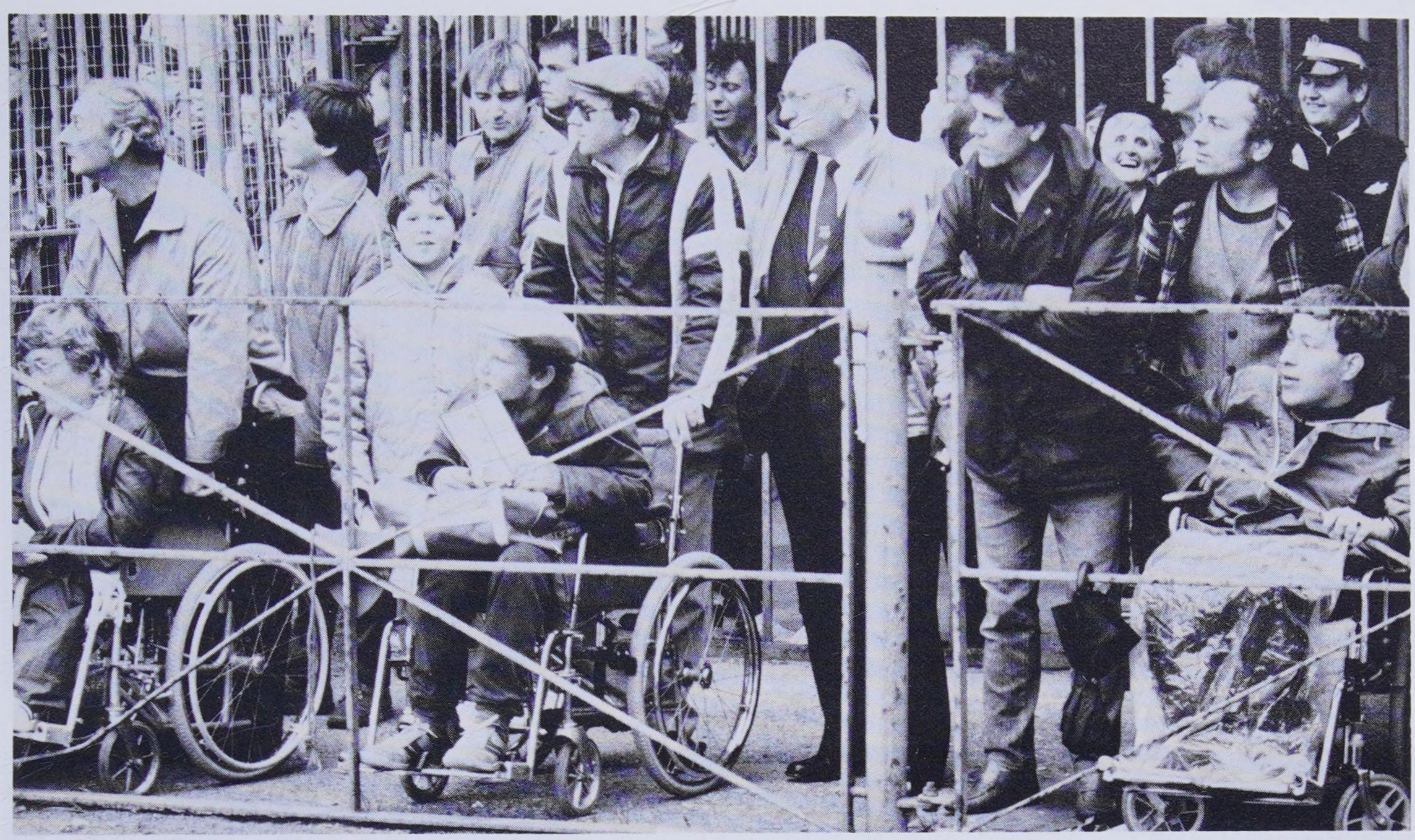
Top of the Table
DIVISION II

	Home Goals						Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
POMPEY	5	3	0	0	9	0	1	1	0	4	3	13
Blackburn	5	2	1	0	5	2	1	1	0	4	2	11
Oldham	5	2	1	0	8	5	1	0	1	3	1	10
Charlton	4	2	0	0	4	1	1	1	0	4	3	10
Wimbledon	5	2	0	0	4	0	1	1	1	1	4	10
Sheffield U	4	1	1	0	5	1	1	1	0	3	1	8
Barnsley	5	2	1	0	5	2	0	1	1	2	3	8
Huddersfield	5	1	0	1	5	5	1	2	0	5	4	8
Brighton	5	1	2	0	4	3	1	0	1	3	3	8
Millwall	4	2	0	0	5	2	0	1	1	4	5	7
Crystal Palace	4	1	0	1	3	3	1	1	0	4	2	7

And so to Gay Meadow and a meeting with a Shrewsbury side still seeking their first win of the season. It was to be a memorable night for one man — Richard Money. The former Fulham and Liverpool defender had battled for 18 months to save his career from a premature end through a knee injury. Now he found himself pitched back into the Second Division as illness ruled out summer signing Kenny Swain.

Just follow my finger.....

Nicky Morgan's flat-out, so's Norwich keeper Chris Wood.
Pompey are ahead and Morgan's just set a club record by scoring in each of the first five matches. Noel Blake and Vince Hilaire are quick to congratulate - and Mick Channon, late of Norwich, is not far behind.



John Deacon goes walk-about.

S-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g's good for you.

Norwich keeper Chris Wood can only turn and stare as Nicky Morgan's second goal hits the roof of the net; and Morgan can only turn and celebrate the event.
Substitute Paul Wood's none too miserable either.

There was this geezer wiv free legs yer see..... Nicky Morgan seems to have qualified for the three-legged race.

A right ol' knees-up.

POMPEY

4. September 1985

September 3
SHREWSBURY 1, POMPEY 1

Pompey's run of victories — and Nicky Morgan's run of goals — ended on the banks of the Severn. They ended in a match which compensated for the fundamental nature of some of its football with the intensity and pace with which it was fought. Pompey were the more cultured side but Shrewsbury's long-ball counter-attacking tactics were dangerous and without a safe-handling performance from Knight, a towering display by Noel Blake and goal line clearances by Richard Money, Kevin Dillon and Kevin Ball, Pompey's unbeaten record would have gone.

Pompey, in fact, took the lead in the 21st minute when Money's long cross beat the defence and Kevin O'Callaghan nipped in to grab his first goal of the season. Two minutes from the interval though and Shrewsbury were level; Vince Hilaire's pass was cut out by Bernard McNally and Knight could only touch the cross leaving Colin Robinson to score. Money and Dillon prevented Shrewsbury going ahead at the start of the season half with their goal-line clearances and then Pompey had the chance of the match. Morgan nodded on another long cross by Money but Dillon sacrificed accuracy for power and the shot flew yards wide.

The rest of the night belonged to Shrewsbury; Gerry Nardiello hit the angle of post and bar and the pressure culminated in a spectacular flying rescue act by Ball which preserved a point.

Shrewsbury: Perks, Williams, Kerr, Cross, Griffin, Stevens, McNally, Hackett, Nardiello, Robinson, Tester. Sub, Bates.
Pompey: Knight, Money, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Ball, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 65), Hilaire.
Referee: David Scott (Burnley).
Attendance: 3,719.

The week also included the draw for the second round of the Milk Cup with Pompey one of the seeded sides. This time they were paired with Third Division Gillingham in the round in which their dreams had crashed to Aston Villa and Nottingham Forest in the previous two seasons.

But that was three weeks away — and all eyes were concentrated on the League with a visit to Fulham their immediate preoccupation. Pompey had produced one of their most fluent and effective performances at Craven Cottage the previous season — now Fulham were out for revenge. Pompey travelled to London boosted by the knowledge that their start had earned manager Ball August's Bells gallon of whisky as the Second Division's top boss.

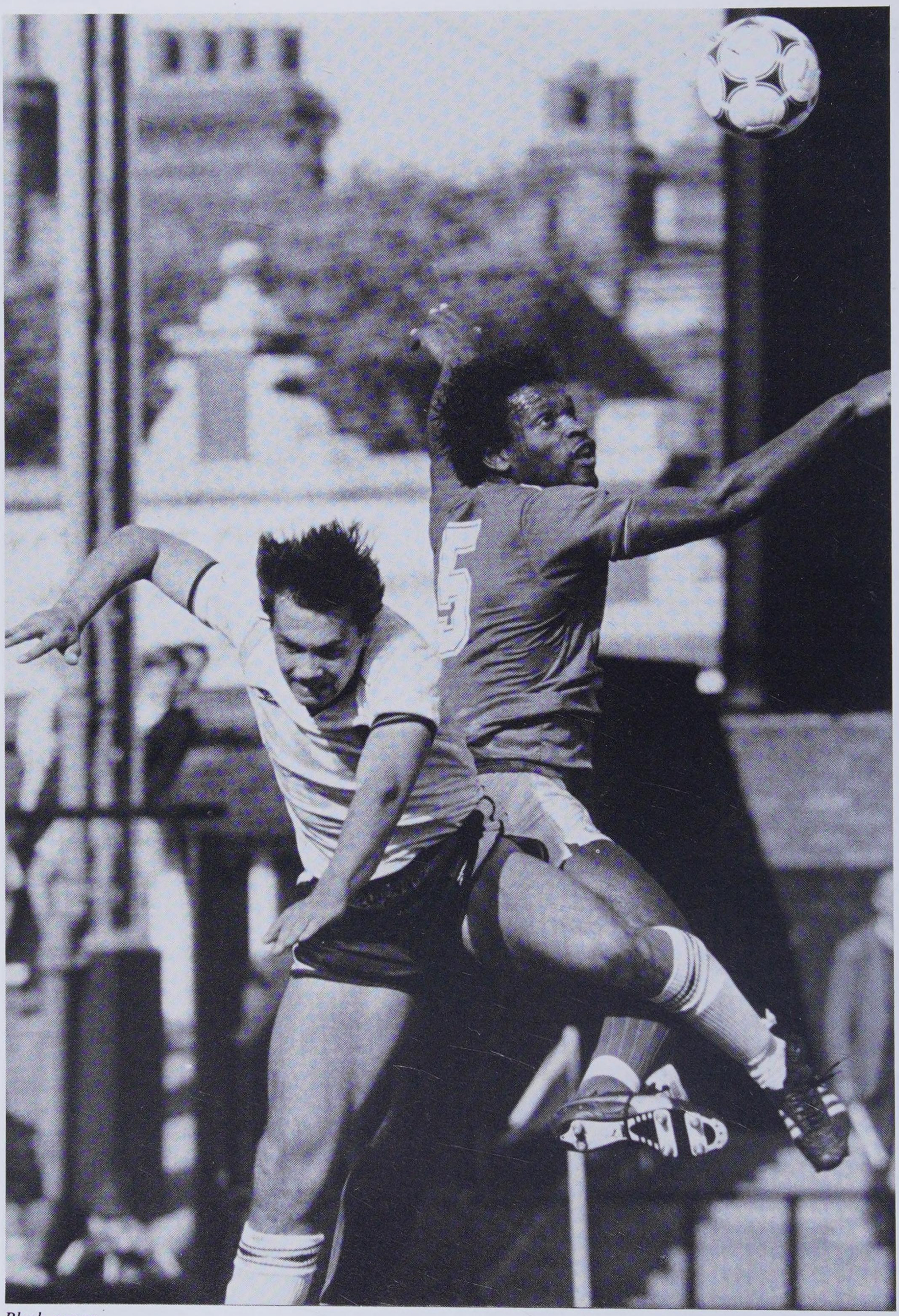
September 7
FULHAM 0, POMPEY 1

Not the Pompey who had dazzled the previous Easter Monday — or the Pompey who had stamped themselves as promotion favourites. But the result was still good, if slightly cruel on a Fulham side in the re-building stage after a massive summer sale.

In the first half Pompey certainly produced their least convincing performance of the season but thanks to another commanding performance by Noel Blake and another goal-line clearance by Kevin Ball, again deputising for Billy Gilbert, they were not punished for their lethargy. Then in the 62nd minute Pompey stole the points with a goal of glorious quality. Kevin Dillon swept a long pass out to Vince Hilaire on the right, Kevin O'Callaghan brought down his cross and from just inside the penalty area hammered it across goalkeeper Mark Grew and inside the post.

It was to prove their only on-target shot of the entire afternoon. If that was not enough to convince Fulham that this was not to be their day, the final proof came in the 82nd minute when Dean Coney, later to be the subject of Pompey's striker-search, beat Knight but saw his shot come off the underside of the bar and back into the relieved goalkeeper's arms. And to round off their misery in the last few minutes their outstanding little defender Paul Parker was carried off with a dislocated shoulder after an awkward fall.

Fulham: Grew, Cottingham (Donnellan), Carr, Scott, Hopkins, Parker, Marshall, Achampong, Sealy, Coney, Houghton.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Ball, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Tait 67), Hilaire.
Referee: Ian Barrett (Eye, Suffolk).
Attendance: 9,331.



Black power. . . .

How would you react to a knee in your back?

A split second from disaster; Paul Parker tangles with Mick Tait and a dislocated shoulder is on its way.

Pompey now had their first breather of the season, with a week until Stoke City visited Fratton. But there was painful action for Kevin O'Callaghan. He had been recalled to the Republic of Ireland squad for their World Cup tie in Switzerland and finished with a knee injury which was to threaten his ever-present status in Pompey's side. In the end though Ball's fears were groundless and O'Callaghan was fit to face Stoke.

There was one surprise change in the side though — Paul Hardyman was rested after reporting slight hamstring trouble and Mick Tait was given another chance to prove his versatility.

September 14
POMPEY 3, STOKE CITY 0

Played four, won four, goals for 12, goals against nil. those were the impressive statistics of Pompey's home record after this entertaining match. Stoke, a team rebuilding under Mick Mills' player-management and with five under 20, made life difficult for them in the first half. But once Mick Channon's inspired lay-off and Nick Morgan's now expected high quality finish had broken the deadlock, there was only one winner. But it took until the 53rd minute to arrive.

In the first half Pompey played neatly enough but had failed to crack a defence well organized by the vastly experienced Mills. All that changed though as Channon's backheel of Kenny Swain's pass opened up Stoke's defence and Morgan tucked away his eighth goal of the season. Eight minutes later Paul Dyson could only haul Morgan down from behind for Kevin Dillon to convert the penalty.

That done, Channon made his now predictable departure to bring on Paul Wood's pace and the youngster had been on only five minutes when he wrapped up the points with a fine first goal of the season. He outjumped everyone to meet Swain's cross and steer it into the top corner. Stoke though might have left with the claim of being the first visiting side to score at Fratton when Phil Heath deceived Alan Knight with an inswinging corner but that distinction was denied them as Noel Blake crowned another outstanding performance by clearing of the line.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 72), Hilaire.
Stoke: Fox, Parkin, Mills, Beeston, Dyson, Berry, Williams, Maskery, Bertschin, Saunders, Heath. Sub, Callaghan. *Referee*: Tony Ward (London). *Attendance*: 13,720.

With a highly successful month behind him, Alan Ball turned to trying to strengthen his squad. His target was one of the stormy petrels of the game; 20-year-old Steve Bell, a young man who had been dubbed the new George Best when he first appeared in Middlesbrough's team as a 16-year-old and who had seemed intent of proving he could also be a Best off the field as well. After a series of escapades, Middlesbrough were prepared to allow him to move to Pompey for around £10,000 in a last ditch effort to save him from destroying his richly promising career.

The Bell negotiations went on as Pompey — and many other clubs — prepared for their entrance into the game's newest and seemingly most unwanted competition. They were due to face Charlton Athletic in the Full Members'

Pick that one out - another goal for Morgan and two more opponents on their knees.

Nicky Morgan's said something naughty.... at least one Stoke defender looks shocked.

Cup with a visit to Chelsea scheduled to complete their pool. Ball used the exercise for experimental purposes; giving Paulsgrove teenager Kevin Russell his senior debut as replacement for Kevin O'Callaghan, and promoting 17-year-old Lee Sandford from youth team to substitute's bench.

Morgan, torpedo- but off target this time.

Down and smiling.... Morgan's just got a penalty.

September 17
POMPEY 4, CHARLTON ATHLETIC 1
Full Members' Cup'

Charlton became the first side to crack Pompey's Fratton Park defensive impregnability — but couldn't halt their storming start to the season. But the apathy of clubs to this new competition was matched by the public's lack of interest and only 3,000 bothered to turn up.

Charlton's offside tactics smothered Pompey's enterprise and a final flourish of incident with five goals coming in the last half hour. The first half was totally featureless and the match came to life only after an hour when Kevin Dillon's pass finally sprung Charlton's suffocating trap and allowed Paul Wood to race clear and curl home a neat shot. The lead lasted only three minutes before big John Pender claimed the distinction of being the first visitor to score at Fratton when he powered home Mark Reid's long free kick.

Again there was a goal within three minutes; this time Kevin Russell, who was making his competitive debut, floated over a centre and Noel Blake thundered in a header. Promptly Alan Ball gave 17-year-old Sandford his first senior taste as he replaced Kenny Swain and immediately it was 3-1 as Mark Aizlewood's attempt to head the ball back to his goalkeeper misfired and Wood intercepted and lobbed the advancing Nicky Johns — a goal Charlton vainly disputed. Five minutes later from time came the now almost statutory Nicky Morgan goal as he bundled home Dillon's low cross — the centre-forward's ninth of the season.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain (Sandford 73), Dillon, Blake, Ball, Russell, Kennedy (Stanley 53), Morgan, Wood, Hilaire.

Charlton Athletic: Johns, Humphrey, Reid, Loveridge, Pender, Aizlewood, Towner, Gritt, Pearson, Shipley, Stewart (Lee).
Referee: John Deakin (South Glamorgan)
Attendance: 3,074.

That comprehensive victory over a Charlton side up among the leaders in the Second Division, took Pompey's unbeaten start to the season into double figures. But that was where it was destined to end — Oldham Athletic saw to that.

September 21
OLDHAM ATHLETIC 2, POMPEY 0

Defeat is never easy to accept — but almost intolerable when the losers have dominated the match. And that was the case at rain-lashed Boundary Park.

A year earlier Pompey had poached a two goal victory in the same match after being under intense pressure for much of the afternoon. Here things were reversed; Pompey made most of the running, created the better chances and went away empty handed. In particular it was cruel on young Kevin Ball who was drafted into midfield to cover the absence of Mick Kennedy and might have ended the afternoon with a hat trick. One header by him hit the bar, another was well saved by Andy Goram and the third chance escaped as the ball bobbled away from him in front of goal.

After a first half when niggling fouls constantly disrupted the flow, Oldham sneaked into the lead in the 48th minute when Mick Quinn, later of course to move to Fratton, held off Noel Blake and Roger Palmer eased home his cross. Then Ron Futcher tightened Oldham's grip with a superb header from John Ryan's corner.

But from that moment Pompey took complete control but the finish to round off their impressive football was missing, and, with Goram showing the form which was later to earn him a trip to Mexico with Scotland, Pompey were left to ponder what might have been.

Oldham: Goram, Donachie, Ryan, McDonough, Hoolickin, McGuire, Palmer, Henry, Quinn, Futcher, Atkinson. Sub, Bullock.
Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Ball, Morgan, Channon (Stanley 60), Hilaire.
Referee: John Lovatt (Crewe)
Attendance: 5,814.

The chance to exorcise that defeat from their system was only three days away — and taken devastingly. It was provided by the Milk Cup and a meeting with Third Division Gillingham.

September 24
GILLINGHAM 1, POMPEY 3
Milk Cup second round, first leg
The gulf between the upper reaches of the Third Division and of the top of the Second was ruthlessly demonstrated as Pompey virtually booked their passage into the third round of the competition. Alan Ball rested Mick Channon, using the first leg of the tie to give Paul Wood a chance to prove his progress. And Wood took the opportunity greedily, playing his full part in an impressive all round performance.

Gillingham had been unbeaten for nine matches since the opening day of the season, but they were left trailing by the speed and class of Pompey's football. In particular they had no answer to the trickery and pace of wingers Kevin O'Callaghan and Vince Hilaire. Gillingham made a bright start but after Karl Elsey had fired an early chance narrowly wide and Keith Oakes had wasted the opportunity provided by one of Tony Cascarino's few aerial victories over Noel Blake, Pompey took control and in the 25th minute were on their way with a spectacular goal. O'Callaghan controlled Nick Tait's short pass on the edge of the penalty area, dummied space for himself and smashed home a glorious shot. Five minutes later Hilaire's cross reached his fellow winger and his angled shot was deflected home by Tait.

Gillingham might have been buried before the interval but two goal-line clearances kept their hopes flickering and when Cascarino, fresh from his first involvement with the Republic of Ireland squad, whipped his seventh goal of the season off the inside of a post in the 48th minute, those hopes burst into life. But within four minutes they had been extinguished; Kevin Dillon threaded a long through ball between two defenders and Wood was away to out-pace Peter Shaw, draw Ron Hillyard and clip home a goal of superb composure.

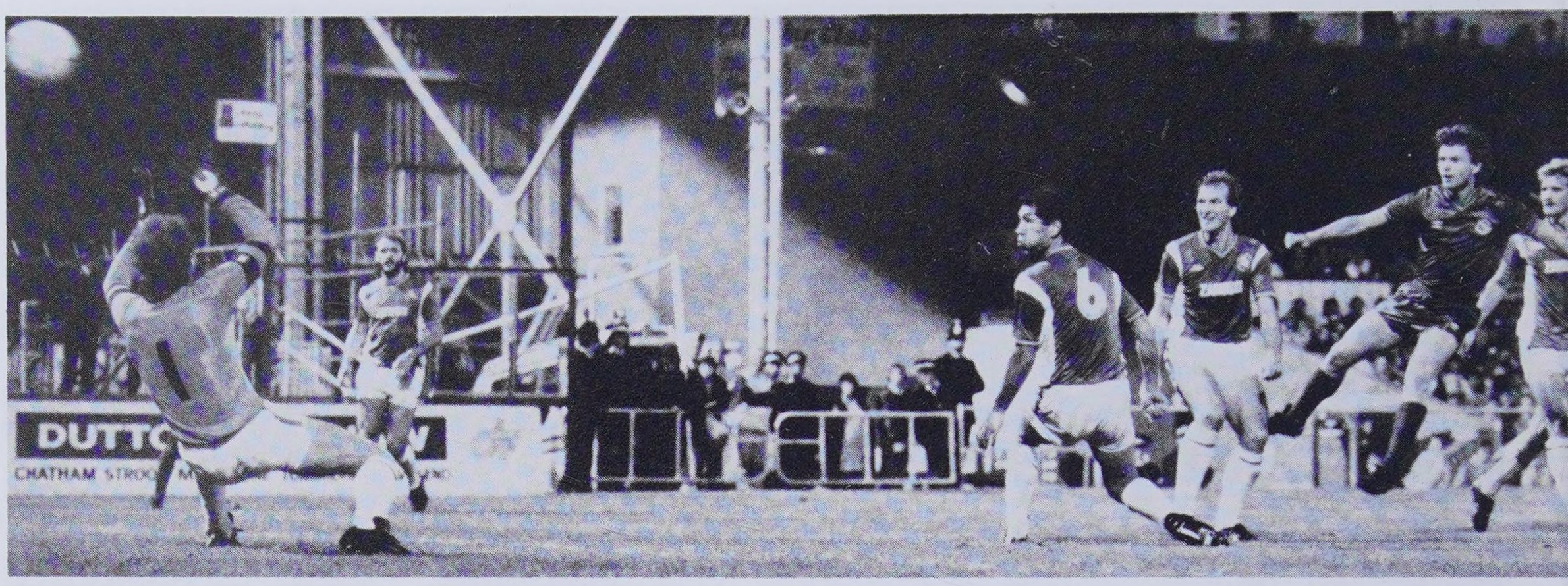
Gillingham: Hillyard, Sage, Hinnigan, Oakes, Collins, Shaw, Cochrane, Weatherly, Elsey (Macowat), Mehmet, Cascarino.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Tait, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Ball.
Referee: Dan Vickers (Ilford).
Attendance: 4,617.

And so the fans had a talking point for the rest of the week — would Wood's Priestfield Stadium performance persuade manager Ball that he should retain the number 10 shirt against Blackburn Rovers or would he opt for the experience and know-how of Mick Channon? It was one of two difficult decisions Ball had to make — the other was in midfield where Tait had excelled in Kennedy's absence.

In the end, Ball settled for Channon, relegating Wood to the substitute's bench, and accepted the difficult task fo telling Tait that his performance and goal against Gillingham had not been quite sufficient to leave Kennedy kicking his heels. Meanwhile, as Pompey prepared for their meeting with the side who had been one of their main rivals the previous season, young Bell had begun his desperate attempt to rehabilitate his career at Fratton. He was to be found pounding the sea front pavements each day seeking the fitness he had allowed to be dissipated at Middlesbrough.

Sadly though it was to prove a vain exercise; almost before he had arrived, he had returned to the North East admitting that he could not face the intense physical demands of redressing the balance — a great talent wasted. And at the same time Pompey's ranks were increased by the return from a summer in Sweden of big striker Dave Bamber. As he began re-adjusting to life in England, Malcolm Waldron was hoping he could start getting to grips with training again. Pompey's reserve centre-half had been struggling to regain his fitness after a summer cartilage operation and was approaching the point where training might be possible — a vain hope as it turned out.

Pacy Paul. Paul Wood leaves the defence behind and its 3-0.



Kevin O'Callaghan's shot leaves Gillingham keeper Ron Hillyard flat-footed

September 28
POMPEY 3 BLACKBURN 0

Another impressive all round performance — first of defensive security which totally smothered Blackburn — and then of patience and chance taking. Ball spent half time reminding his team of the importance of remaining patient and working for their openings — and then saw the late proof of his words as Pompey grabbed two goals in the last 15 minutes to underline their overall superiority over their visitors.

They had taken the lead in the seventh minute with an historic if slightly lucky goal. It's scorer was Mick Channon, it was his first for Pompey and the 223rd of his smiling 20-year love affair with the game. It came when one of Mick Kennedy's long throws was headed away by Simon Barker but the clearance hit Kevin O'Callaghan and bounced kindly to leave Channon clear to curl his shot clinically past his old Southampton team mate Terry Gennoe.

Pompey rarely looked like adding to that before the interval and with Noel Blake and Billy Gilbert clamping a ruthless grip on their men, Blackburn never looked like wiping out the lead. But as the second half progressed, the visitors began to push more men forward and O'Callaghan and Vince Hilaire began to exploit the gaps they left at the back.

After 66 minutes Channon made his now expected departure, this time to a standing ovation, and Wood came on to quickly make an impact. He had been on only nine minutes when O'Callaghan's sinuous run set Wood up for a shot which Gennoe could only beat away and Hilaire jubilantly hooked home. Four minutes from time Gennoe could only parry another shot, this time from Hilaire, and this time it was O'Callaghan who gleefully finished the job. No wonder the season's largest crowd — 16,870 — went home happy.

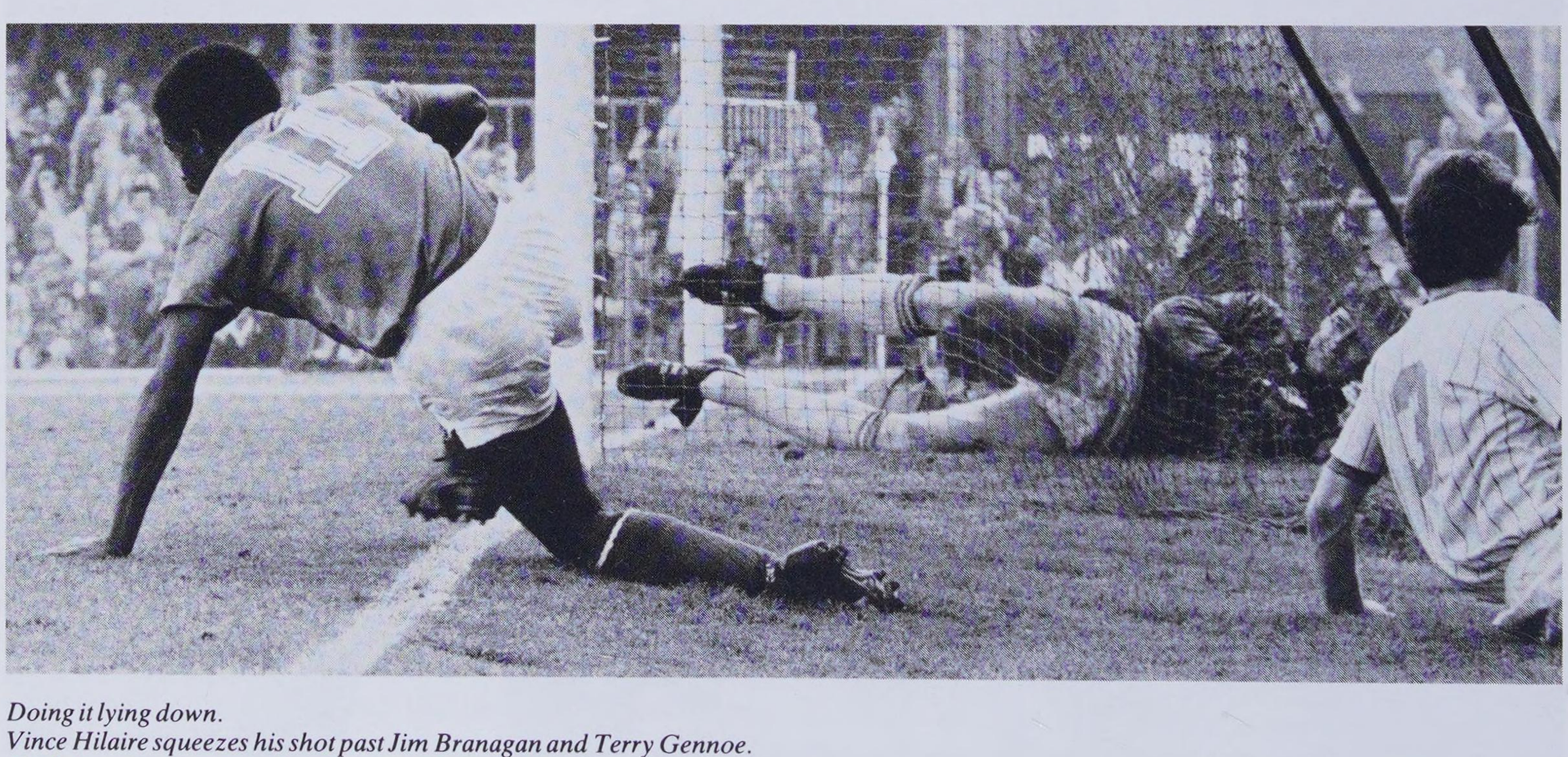
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 66), Hilaire.
Blackburn: Gennoe, Hamilton, Branagan, Barker, Keeley, Fazackerley, Miller, Lowey, Quinn, Garner, Rathbone. Sub, Mail.
Referee: Keith Cooper (Pontypridd).
Attendance: 16,870.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
POMPEY	10	5	0	0	15	0	2	2	1	6	6	23
Oldham	10	4	1	0	12	6	2	1	2	5	4	20
Blackburn	10	4	1	0	8	2	1	2	2	5	8	18
Brighton	10	3	2	1	9	5	2	0	2	4	4	17
Wimbledon	10	4	1	0	8	1	1	1	3	1	8	17
Charlton	8	4	0	0	9	2	1	1	2	6	8	16
Barnsley	10	4	1	0	8	2	0	3	2	3	5	16
Norwich	10	4	1	0	12	4	0	2	3	4	9	15
Huddersfield	10	2	2	1	7	5	1	3	1	6	6	14
Sheffield U	9	1	2	1	6	3	2	2	1	7	8	13
Leeds	10	1	4	1	6	6	2	0	2	7	10	13

Now all soccer was suddenly talking about the possiblility of a breakaway Super League — and Pompey admitted they were involved. Chairman John Deacon revealed that he had been approached to test his interest in the idea and that he had given an emphatic 'Yes'. But as that tasty prospect was being digested by their fans, a sobering lesson in the class gap Pompey might have to span if they were to join the breakaway — or more conventionally gain promotion — was awaiting them. Their second Full Members' Cup group match was at Stamford Bridge and high riding Chelsea were in no mood to be charitable.

No problems this time - Paul Wood and Glenn Keeley whose last meeting had an unhappy ending.



Doing it lying down.
Vince Hilaire squeezes his shot past Jim Branagan and Terry Gennoe.
But he's soon up and about to get a cuddle from Woodie.

Scrum-down - celebration style. Mick Channon's just notched his first goal for Pompey.

On your tippy-tippy toe. Old man Mick turns on a bit of ballet.

POMPEY

5. October 1985

October 2
CHELSEA 3, POMPEY 0
Full Members Cup

Two sloppy goals in the first five minutes effectively ended this match as a contest — and denied manager Ball any basis on which to gauge his side's readiness for the big time. Ball had again rested Mick Channon, giving Paul Wood another full match chance, while he also drafted Kevin Ball into the middle of the defence rather than risk Billy Gilbert aggravating a knee injury in a competition which had a low priority status.

Pompey had scarcely adapted to their surroundings than they were behind to a slack goal — a long ball forward by Nigel Spackman defeated Noel Blake and John Bumpstead chased through to lift it over Alan Knight's head from long range. By the fifth minute Chelsea had put things out of Pompey's reach with a second goal. Kerry Dixon, who generally got little change from Blake, chested down Spackman's cross and Chelsea's £300,000 recruit from Spurs, Mick Hazard, popped it home.

For the rest of the night Pompey chased redemption of their reputation but the sum of their efforts was two long range shots by Mick Kennedy, one of which at least provided employment for Eddie Niedzwiecki, and shortly before the end David Speedie who had always provided young Ball with too many unanswerable questions, set up Dixon to score with a close-range header. "As long as we learn from the experience, it will not be for nothing," was Ball's philosophical response to a king-sized beating.

Chelsea: Niedzwiecki, Wood, Roughvie, Pates, McLaughlin, Bumstead, Nevin, Hazard (Canoville), Dixon, Speedie, Spackman.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Ball, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire (Tait 56).
Referee: Gilbert Napthine (Loughborough).
Attendance: 6,833.

Meanwhile there was talk of Mark Hateley in the air again for Pompey's fans, but talk quickly torpedoed from the centre-forward whose sale to A.C. Milan 18 months earlier had earned Pompey a near £1 million profit. Hateley was reported to be unsettled in Italy and pining for a return to Fratton — a desire John Deacon admitted he would be only too happy to grant. But from Milan, Hateley quickly made it clear it was a nice thought — but something which would have to wait a long time before it became fact. "At the moment. I'm loving every minute of it out here in Italy," he said. "Perhaps one day I'll come back to Portsmouth and perhaps I'll be young enough to play for them — that would be nice."

Of more immediate concern was the need to play their Stamford Bridge performance out of their system — and Barnsley's Oakwell Stadium seemed to offer a none-too promising stage for that. But appearances can be deceptive — and were.

October 5
BARNSLEY 0, POMPEY 1

Noel Blake seems to have a thing about playing in front of Barnsley's supporters. The previous season Pompey's big centre-half had snatched an injury time equalizer which launched the team on the late unbeaten run which almost got them out of the Division. Here he produced another outstanding performance crowned by the only goal.

On the surface it was likely to be one of Pompey's toughest examinations of the season; Barnsley had won four of their five home matches, drawing the other and had conceded only two goals in doing so. But the Yorkshire side never threatened to extend that impressive run; they had no answer to the defensive steel of Blake, Billy Gilbert and Kenny Swain.

And Ball's decision to employ Mick Tait, rather than Paul Wood as substitute, also proved inspired. For early in the first half a cynically late tackle wrecked Paul Hardyman's knee ligaments and Pompey were able to replace him without disrupting their pattern. Only one Barnsley player threatened to ruffle Pompey's control; 17-year-old England youth striker David Hirst. Hirst's powerful performance was to stay with Ball and was to prompt an unsuccessful bid to recruit him for Pompey's ailing cause in February. The only

Blakie on the Barnsley goal-standard again.

goal came in the 13th minute; Kevin O'Callaghan got the ball back from Vince Hilaire from Pompey's first corner, crossed and Blake held off a lightweight challenge from centre-forward Ian Walsh to hook the ball home. After that Pompey efficiently defended their lead without undue problems.

Barnsley: Baker, Joyce, Gray, May, Burns, Futcher, Hirst, Thomas, Walsh, Cross, Campbell. Sub, Owen.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman (Tait 28), Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire.
Referee: Malcolm Heath (Stoke).
Attendance: 7,064.

While Pompey were celebrating, their club captain Mick Baxter was coming to terms with the end of his playing career. Baxter had fought a 14 month battle with Hodgkins Disease and seemed to have won it. The price was, that though a normal working life seemed possible, there was little chance of him ever playing again. He had intended making a final decision at Christmas; now his specialist had made it for him. At the same time there were stirrings in the transfer market with Fourth Division Scunthorpe United showing interest in both Richard Money, who had not been back in the reckoning since his appearance at Shrewsbury, and Gary Stanley. But they were looking for experience without being prepared to pay and their initial overtures were rejected.

Paul Hardyman's latest piece of misfortune — damaged knee ligaments which were to keep him out of action for almost two months — provided Alan Ball with a defensive problem for the second leg of the Milk Cup tie with Gillingham. Kenny Swain was nursing a slight injury and to protect him, Ball decided to pitch Lee Sandford in for his debut. It was a challenge the 17-year-old from Basingstoke was to meet head on and hungrily.

October 8
POMPEY 2, GILLINGHAM 1
Milk Cup second round, second leg

Pompey win 5-2 on aggregate.

Progress into the third round of the competition and the preservation of the unbeaten home record were Pompey's only consolations from this night's exercise.

For the rest it was a far from satisfactory evening with events soured by a double sending off. First to go was Gillingham's Eire striker Tony Cascarino who challenged Noel Blake heavily for a high ball in the 40th minute and was dismissed by referee Eddie Scales. It was a shock ending to what had seemed no more than a meeting of two fairly immovable objects. Within the two minutes it was a battle of ten-men-each when young Paul Wood followed Cascarino down tunnel for a late and wild challenge on Karl Elsey.

Those unsavoury incidents were the only half time talking points for the crowd; for there had been little genuine action as Pompey seemed lured into complacency by their two goal first leg lead and Gillingham, overawed. It changed dramatically nine minutes into the second half, thanks to an error by Kevin Dillon who sliced a low cross by Elsey into his own net — and Pompey suddenly stirred themselves as Gillingham sensed an escape from the fate seemingly decreed at Priestfield Stadium a fortnight earlier. It took just two minutes for Pompey to kill the Third Division side's ambition — and young Sandford was the man who did it. He had settled into his first senior match with impressive composure and it was he who ran on to Mick Tait's backheel on the edge of the penalty area and fired home a right foot shot.

Pompey now began to play with the authority their fans expected and in the 76th minute they underlined their growing superiority with the winner. Again it involved both wingers Kevin O'Callaghan and Vince Hilaire who were now repeating their first-leg torture of the Gillingham defence. This time Hilaire's cross was missed by a file of defenders, O'Callaghan floated it back into the middle and Morgan took his impressive tally into double figures.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Sandford, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Ball.
Gillingham: Hillyard, Sage, Elsey, Oakes, Weatherly, Shaw, Cochrane, Byrne, Hales, Collins, Cascarino. Sub, Macowat.
Referee: Eddie Scales (Ware).
Attendance: 7,629.

One man not at the match to see Pompey progress was Richard Money. He was in Scunthorpe talking over a move to the club where his career had begun. By the end of the week, his departure from Fratton, where he had seen his career threatened by injury, was confirmed. And by then Pompey knew that they would face Stoke City in the third round of the Milk Cup.

But of more immediate concern was the home meeting with Charlton in the League when there was a score to be settled. Charlton had poached an improbable victory at Fratton the previous season and it was one of the days still pin-pointed by many as a reason for failing to escape the Division.

Mick's with the Woolwich.

OHH...!

October 12
POMPEY 1, CHARLTON 0

Another win, another clean sheet — but another match marred by a controversial incident and sending off. For the second time in the week Pompey found themselves having to battle away with only ten men after skipper Mick Kennedy was dismissed early in the second half. Kennedy became involved in an incident between Vince Hilaire and Mark Reid and referee Brian Stevens sent him packing. By that time Pompey were already in front — and after Kennedy had made his exit they were to defend that lead with considerable class. But before Kevin Dillon was to score the ultimately decisive goal in first half injury time, Pompey had always threatened to underline their smooth football with a goal. Kevin O'Callaghan had beaten Nicky Johns with one close range shot only to see it hit the inside of a post and roll along the line and be cleared and Noel Blake had swept a shot just over the bar.

Then in the 46th minute Charlton centre-forward John Pearson flicked an O'Callaghan free kick off Mick Channon's lunging head with his fist and Dillon clinically tucked away another penalty. Ten minutes into the second half and Kennedy was gone but Pompey proceeded to display considerable character and organization to deny Charlton the chance to make their numerical advantage tell.
Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire. Sub, Wood.
Charlton: Johns, Humphrey, Reid, Gritt, Thompson, Pender, Shipley, Lee, Pearson, Curbishley, Friar (Flanagan).
Referee: Brian Stevens (Stonehouse).
Attendance: 15,549.

That match made Ball's players record breakers — the best sequence of clean sheets in the club's long history. They had not conceded a goal in six home matches — beating the record which had stood since the misty days of the Southern League in 1900. But another niche in the club's hall of fame was beckoning. Victory over Crystal Palace would see them equal the seven-home-win start to the season 1948-49 which had been the springboard to the club's first First Division championship. The chance to earn equal status with the Dickinsons, Froggatts and Scoulars was to be eagerly and impressively taken.

October 19
POMPEY 1, CRYSTAL PALACE 0

A single goal by the man with the suddenly acquired golden touch, Nicky Morgan, ensured their place alongside the men of '48. Yet that apparently nailbiting scoreline did nothing to reflect a match which Pompey dominated from first whistle to last.

They dominated it defensively where Noel Blake and former Palace man Billy Gilbert were magnificent, in midfield where Mick Kennedy exited into a two match ban with a thunderous display, balancing the more delicate touch of Kevin Dillon, and up front where both wingers, and in particular Palace discovery Vince Hilaire, tormented.

Their slender return from so much pleasing football was a testimony to the resilience of the veteran partnership of Jim Cannon and Micky Droy, and the reflexes of former Scots international keeper George Wood. In the end the match was decided in the 37th minute when O'Callaghan nodded on Gilbert's free kick and Morgan sniffed out his 11th goal in 17 appearances — some strike-rate.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 63), Hilaire.
Crystal Palace: Wood, Locke, Brush, Taylor, Droy, Cannon, Irvine, Finnigan, Wright, Aylott, Barber. Sub, Higginbottom.
Referee: Ron Groves (Weston Super Mare).
Attendance: 16,538.

Generally, of course, soccer was paying the price for the failure of its negotiatiors to reach an agreement with television. The game was receiving no screen-time and sponsors Canon were less than amused as they proved by cutting their bonuses. Also less than amused was Pompey's chairman John Deacon who was to be heard threatening to attempt unilateral action and try to agree a Pompey-only compromise with Southampton based TVS. In the end though, it was another tale with no outcome.

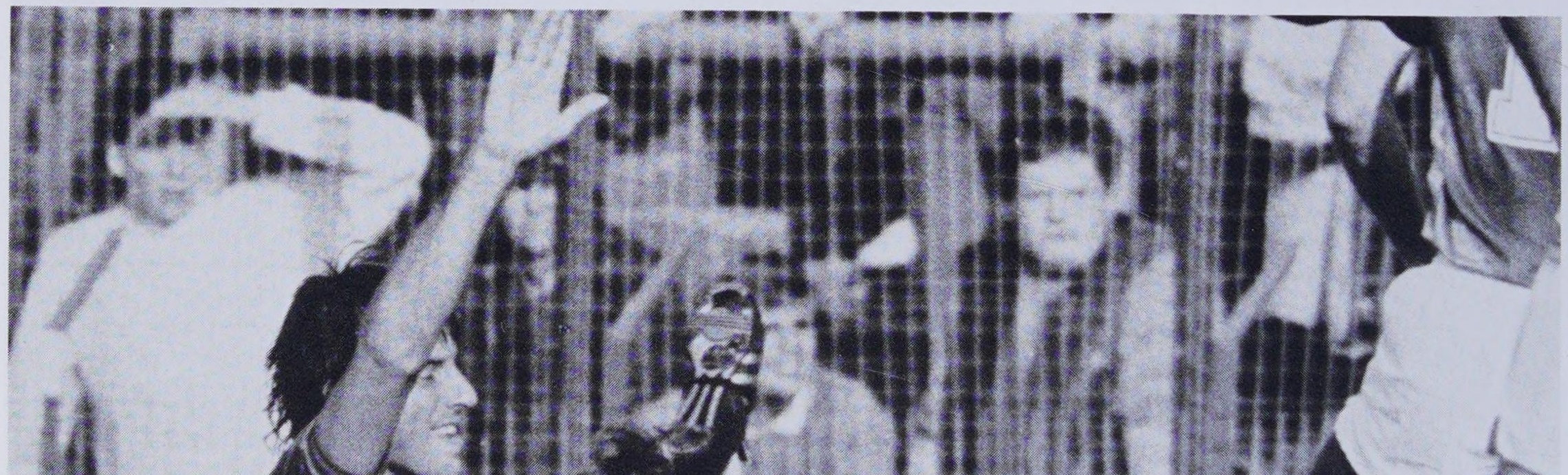
The setting for Pompey's apparently unstoppable surge towards glory now switched to London's dockland and Millwall. But what was to prove possibly their most impressive League performance of the season was to be witnessed by very, very few of their fans. Pompey had refused to take an allocation of tickets for the all ticket match in view of previous trouble at meetings between the clubs. The Board had refused to change their mind although genuine supporters were obviously upset and Mr. Deacon had appealed to fans to stay away and not try to beat the ban.

High rise and even big Mick Droy's all admiration.

1 Cally gets the knock-on as Nicky Morgan waits

continued on next page

2 Now its Morgan's turn



3 Jim Cannon waves a defeated leg - Morgan a celebratory arm

4 Who's a clever boy....

October 26
MILLWALL 0, POMPEY 4

Pompey made it five league wins in a row — and in some style. They did rather more than beat Millwall, they outclassed them and when it was all over Pompey old boy George Graham became the latest manager to predict that First Division football was on its way back to Fratton Park.

Pompey were deprived of Mick Kennedy's aggression by suspension — but that merely provided Mick Tait with another opportunity to display his versatility by switching from full back to midfield. Gary Stanley came in at right back and, in Paul Wood's suspended absence and Kevin Ball's injury, Lee Sandford was on the substitute's bench. He was in fact to get into the action before half time when Kenny Swain limped off; by that time Pompey were already storming to an impressive victory on the back of two MicK Channon-created and Kevin O'Callaghan-accepted goals. Channon set the former Millwall youth team winger up for the first in the 10th minute — Pompey's 25th league goal of the season to earn Canon's £750 bonus as the first in the Division to that total.

Eleven minutes later and Channon sent O'Callaghan away and although Paul Sansome saved his first shot, the winger followed up to give his old teammate no chance. Pompey's victory was ensured within the first three minutes of the second half by two incidents. The first was a superb penalty save by Alan Knight; the second, yet another goal for the prolific Nicky Morgan. Knight, who had so far had such a quiet season, came into the action in the 47th minute when Billy Gilbert was judged to have handled, but Nicky Chatterton's shot was magnificently beaten away. Pompey bounced straight to the other end, Morgan won a corner, O'Callaghan took it and, when Sansome allowed the ball to come off his chest, Morgan greedily snapped up his 12th of the season.

For the rest of the half Pompey were in almost arrogant control and their superiority was finally reflected in the 89th minute when, from yet more canny work by Channon, Morgan struck again.

Millwall: Sansome, Stevens, Hinshelwood, Briley, Walker, Nutton, Lowndes, Chatterton, Leslie, Lovell, Kinsella. Sub, McCleary.
Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Swain (Sandford 38), Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Tait, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire.
Referee: Paul Vanes (Warley, West Midlands).
Attendance: 6,810.

As Pompey were savouring their record-breaking start to the season, their 17-0 home goal aggregate and their comfortable eight point lead at the top of the table, things were also finally beginning to come good for Paul Wimbleton. After three major operations on his knee, the 20-year-old from Leigh Park was given the go ahead to resume full training as a prelude to picking up the threads of a career disrupted three and a half years earlier.

Once more Pompey's eyes switched targets; the Milk Cup was back with a lucrative place in the last 16 at stake. Injury to Kenny Swain, Mick Kennedy and Paul Wood's suspensions, meant another first team taste for Lee Sandford against Stoke City and an escape from the shadows to the comparative sun of the substitute's bench for Scott McGarvey.

October 29
POMPEY 2, STOKE CITY 0
Milk Cup third round

Two falls by Vince Hilaire — and two more penalty masterpieces by Kevin Dillon killed off Stoke. Hilaire went down twice under tackles from Stoke's player manager Mick Mills early in the second half. Mills claimed the first was a dive, but had no complaints about the second.

The result of both though was the same; Dillon beat Peter Fox. The first Mills-contested kick came 30 seconds into the second half with Fox getting his finger tips to Dillon's kick but being unable to prevent it flying into the roof of the net. In the 62nd minute Mills was again outwitted by Hilaire, again he went down and again Dillon carried out the execution — this time without Fox moving.

Stoke though caused their problems and twice in the first half and twice more in the second, Alan Knight had to make crucial and demanding saves.

Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Sandford, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Tait, Morgan, Channon (McGarvey 64), Hilaire.
Stoke City: Fox, Bould, Mills (Saunders), Hemming, Dyson, Berry, Adams, Maskery, Bertschin, Parkin, Heath.
Referee: Alf Buksh (London).
Attendance: 13,319.

Pompey had to wait 36 hours to know their reward for reaching the fourth round — then there was much lip-licking. For the draw paired them with mighty Tottenham Hotspur, provided the London giants could overcome little Wimbledon. They did.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
POMPEY	14	7	0	0	17	0	4	2	1	11	6	35
Oldham	14	6	1	0	18	7	2	2	3	7	7	27
Blackburn	14	5	2	0	11	2	2	2	3	6	10	25
Wimbledon	14	5	2	0	10	2	2	2	3	3	9	25
Norwich	14	5	1	1	16	7	2	2	3	10	9	24
Charlton	13	5	1	0	12	4	2	2	3	12	13	24

Kevin Dillon converts the penalty with Peter Fox helping it into the roof of the net.

POMPEY

6. November 1985

The new month arrived with Pompey in bouyant mood — eight points clear at the top of the division and through to the last 16 of the Milk Cup.

Now their sixth League win in a row beckoned at Leeds — and Mick Kennedy, so crucial to Ball's plans, was available again after suspension. Pompey might have won both games in his absence, scoring six goals and conceding none, but Kennedy was re-instated to the side and Mick Tait returned to his emergency full back role for the trip to Elland Road.

November 2
LEEDS UNITED 2, POMPEY I

A controversial penalty destroyed Pompey's drive for their sixth win — and the chance to go ten points ahead of their nearest rivals. Yet their frustration at the penalty and the defeat could not hide the fact that this was one of their less convincing performances which had seen them on the end of a Leeds assault for much of the afternoon after the promising start of an early goal. Again the marksman was Nicky Morgan. Vince Hilaire got Mick Channon away and his cross drew and beat Mervyn Day leaving Morgan with a close range chance for goal number 14.

Midway through the half Kevin O'Callaghan almost tightened their grip after a superb run but his shot was parried and Channon's follow-up header lacked power. But, although Andy Ritchie, later in the season to feature in an on-off move to Fratton, was to hit their bar with one fierce shot, Pompey were still deservedly in front at half time. But the lead disappeared untidily in the 64th minute as tiny winger Lyndon Simmonds celebrated his debut by scrambling the ball into the net.

Seven minutes later controversy flared as Mick Tait's firm but fair-looking challenge on Ritchie persuaded referee Jones to point to the spot and little Simmonds controlled his 18-year-old nerves to send Knight the wrong way — and send Pompey on their way home feeling distinctly short-changed.

Leeds: Day, Irwin, Phelan, McGregor, Linighan, Aspin, Ritchie, Sheridan, Baird, Hamson, Simmonds. Sub, Sellars.
Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Stanley), Hilaire.
Referee: Trevor Jones (Macclesfield).
Attendance: 15,672.

That match had been veteran Mick Channon's 699th League appearance, his landmark 700th was scheduled for Fratton Park in front of a public who had greeted his signing with a distinct lack of enthusiasm but who had been won over by his attitude and touch. But he was to be denied that pleasure; for on the Thursday, scheduled visitors Middlesbrough cried off as a flu bug left them with only ten fit players. Yet it was a blessing in disguise for Channon since a knee injury had threatened his participation in the match.

There was some consolation though with the result from White Hart Lane where a goal by Portsmouth-born, bred and rejected Dave Leworthy killed off Wimbledon and ensured that Pompey would meet Spurs in the fifth round of the Milk Cup. At the same time Paul Wimbleton had cause for celebration as he came through his first competitive match in almost two years as Pompey's Reserves went down 3-0 to Charlton. Generally though it was a week of bleak news for many of the League's clubs, including Pompey, as Topscore, the fund-raising scheme on which so many had pinned such hopes, collapsed. There had been some rumours about the health of this much-ballyhooed idea for some weeks but they had been steadfastly refuted. Now though it closed down leaving its 85 member clubs counting the cost. At Fratton, Mr. Deacon maintained the adventure had cost Pompey only £10,000, considerably less than some members had suffered.

In the meantime though, there was considerable concern being generated by Spurs' arrangements for the Milk Cup tie. For the North London giants were proposing to send Pompey only 7,700 tickets — but were also planning not to make the match all ticket for their own fans. Mr. Deacon

was particularly unhappy, viewing the possibility of rival fans not being properly segregated with considerable alarm. He even voiced his concern to Hampshire's Chief Constable. Eventually Spurs added 1,000 stand tickets to the allocation but refused to budge on the 5,000 limit for the terraces. That match though was still a week away — of more immediate importance to Alan Ball was the visit to Grimsby. And that was to provide a demonstration in opposites.

The previous Saturday's postponement meant that Mick Channon would reach his 700-match landmark up on the East Coast — and at the same time Lee Sandford, who had not been even a sparkle in his father's eye when Channon first stepped out in a League match, would be making his debut. Everything went well for the pair — except for the result.

November 16
GRIMSBY TOWN 1, POMPEY 0

Meetings with newly promoted teams are one of soccer's least palatable propositions; another is a meeting with a team under new management. This was a case in point. Grimsby had appointed former Everton and Sheffield Wednesday Mick Lyons their player-manager a few days earlier and this was his debut and the first chance for his players to impress him.

Milestone man....

And the man who must have impressed the boss most must have been Nigel Batch in goal. Batch made three superlative saves to ensure that Phil Bonnyman's 62nd minute penalty gave Lyons a winning start to his new career. The afternoon had begun on a sentimental note with Grimsby making a special presentation to mark Channon's anniversary.

But there was little charity on the pitch once the action started — Channon eventually leaving with another painful reminder of his visit; a deep gash under a rapidly blackening eye which had caught an elbow. Batch unveiled his first great save in a first-half which Pompey had shaded, flying to his right to beat away Kevin O'Callaghan's fierce shot.

He matched that early in the second half to frustrate Vince Hilaire but then in the 62nd minute young Sandford halted Tony Ford only to lose possession and for Kevin Dillon to bring down Bonnyman as he controlled the loose ball. Bonnyman picked himself up and managed to squeeze his penalty past Alan Knight's dive. Batch had one more save to make — another soaring effort which beat away another fine effort by Hilaire and killed any hopes Pompey had of saving the match.

Grimsby: Batch, Barrett, Crombie, Peake, Lyons, Kevin Moore, Ford, Gilligan, Hobson, Bonnyman, Emson. Sub, Lund.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 72), Hilaire.
Referee: Peter Tydlesley (Stockport).
Attendance: 6,436.

Now for the first time, the true cost of Pompey's near-miss on a return to the First Division was revealed. The accounts for the year which had ended in that hairsbreadth affair at Huddersfield showed a loss of £431,000 — double the previous year.

Yet there was a note of optimism in the directors' report. 'Since the end of the year, further transfer dealings have taken place and the club is still in a position where ultimately it should show a profit on such dealings.'

One dealing was the £250,000 sale of Neil Webb to Nottingham Forest while there was still a significant proportion of the Mark Hateley fee to come in. The reason for loss was not hard to find; the success run had been reflected in the wagebill which had escalated from £472,000 to £701,000. The accounts underlined once more the enormous investment John Deacon had made in the club — his loan had risen from £174,000 to a massive £434,000.

Paul Wimbleton's place as the longest-serving resident of Pompey's treatment room now seemed reserved for centre-half Malcom Waldron. Waldron had undergone a cartilage operation in the summer but had over-done his work in pre-season to cause further damage to the knee. Now a surgeon confirmed his worst fears — that another operation was needed before he could hope to start playing again.

Now, of course, it was all-eyes on White Hart Lane for the chance to see Pompey test their potential against one

Under and over.... Vince Hilaire lying down on the job again.

of the most star-studded sides in the country. No one was more excited at the prospect than young Sandford whose earliest football had been watched from the Spurs' terraces and whose family were Spurs fans.

But he was to be denied his chance to celebrate full professional status by appearing in the match. He had picked up a slight groin strain at Grimsby and the injury was to return him to the role of reluctant spectator. So Alan Ball had to shuffle his resources again, bringing Gary Stanley in to partner Kenny Swain at full back. Sandford's frustration was matched in the Spurs dressing room by David Leworthy. He had hoped his goal against Wimbledon might have given him the chance to appear against the club who had turfed him into non league football two and a half years earlier — but he was disappointed.

November 20
SPURS 0, POMPEY 0
Milk Cup fourth round

Pompey's name appeared in the list for the quarter final of the Milk Cup for the first time in a quarter of a century after this tremendous performance. It did so thanks to a display of grit and character which saw them the equals of a talent-packed Spurs side.

Billy Gilbert outstanding but perhaps the key to their success lay in midfield when Mick Kennedy snapped and harried to blunt the menace of Glenn Hoddle. It was a night of frenzied football and few clear chances; Spurs' best came shortly before half time but Mark Falco was denied by Alan Knight's fine save while Pompey's came midway through the second half when Mick Channon's close range shot was somehow turned aside by veteran Ray Clemence. The match was to have long-term ramifications; Kevin O'Callaghan was to injure a knee and was never to be free of discomfort for the rest of the season and eventually needed a cartilage operation in the Spring. The result though was fair, no one

really deserved outright passage into the quarter final and a trip to Oxford's Manor Ground.

Spurs: Clemence, Stevens, Hughton, Roberts, Mabbutt, Perryman, Allen, Falco, Galvin (Cooke), Hoddle, Waddle.
Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan (Wood 74), Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire.
Referee: David Axcell (Southend).
Attendance: 28,619.

The replay though was to be an affair of problems. They began almost immediately when the Football League ordered it switched from Pompey's traditional Tuesday to Wednesday night to ease problems in London where the Metropolitan police feared trouble as they tried to segregate Spurs fans on their way to Pompey from Arsenal fans on their way to Southampton for another replay. Pompey initially refused to agree to the change but eventually bowed to pressure from Lytham St Annes with deep reluctance.

But before Spurs travelled South, Pompey had an engagement with a Sheffield United side who had emerged as a major threat to their hold on top place. Sheffield, massively experienced through the recruitment of Peter Withe who had chosen them rather than Pompey, of Phil Thompson and Ken McNaught were on a formidable run of five wins and a draw in six matches which had seen them close up on Pompey as they wobbled at Leeds and Grimsby.

November 23
POMPEY 0, SHEFFIELD UTD 3

Pompey's perfect home record — seven wins, 17 goals for and none against — was left in ruins. Sheffield did not beat them — they overwhelmed them. The defence which had suffocated Spurs at White Hart Lane folded against Sheffield's muscular athleticism — and in particular were exposed by dead ball situations.

Their attack could never find a way through a defence masterminded by the massively experienced Thompson, McNaught and Paul Stancliffe. Ten minutes of frustrated pressure at the start laid the pattern for the afternoon as United countered and pinched the lead. Withe was able to find room to nod down a free kick and Steve Foley tucked it away.

For 23 minutes Pompey searched for a way back — and then found themselves further behind. This time Keith Edwards was able to control a long free kick with room and time to turn and cross for Withe to bury a full length header. Immediately after the interval Pompey might have been back in the match but Nicky Morgan's shot was sliced over the bar by McNaught and from that moment Pompey's pressure became more frantic and less and less effective.

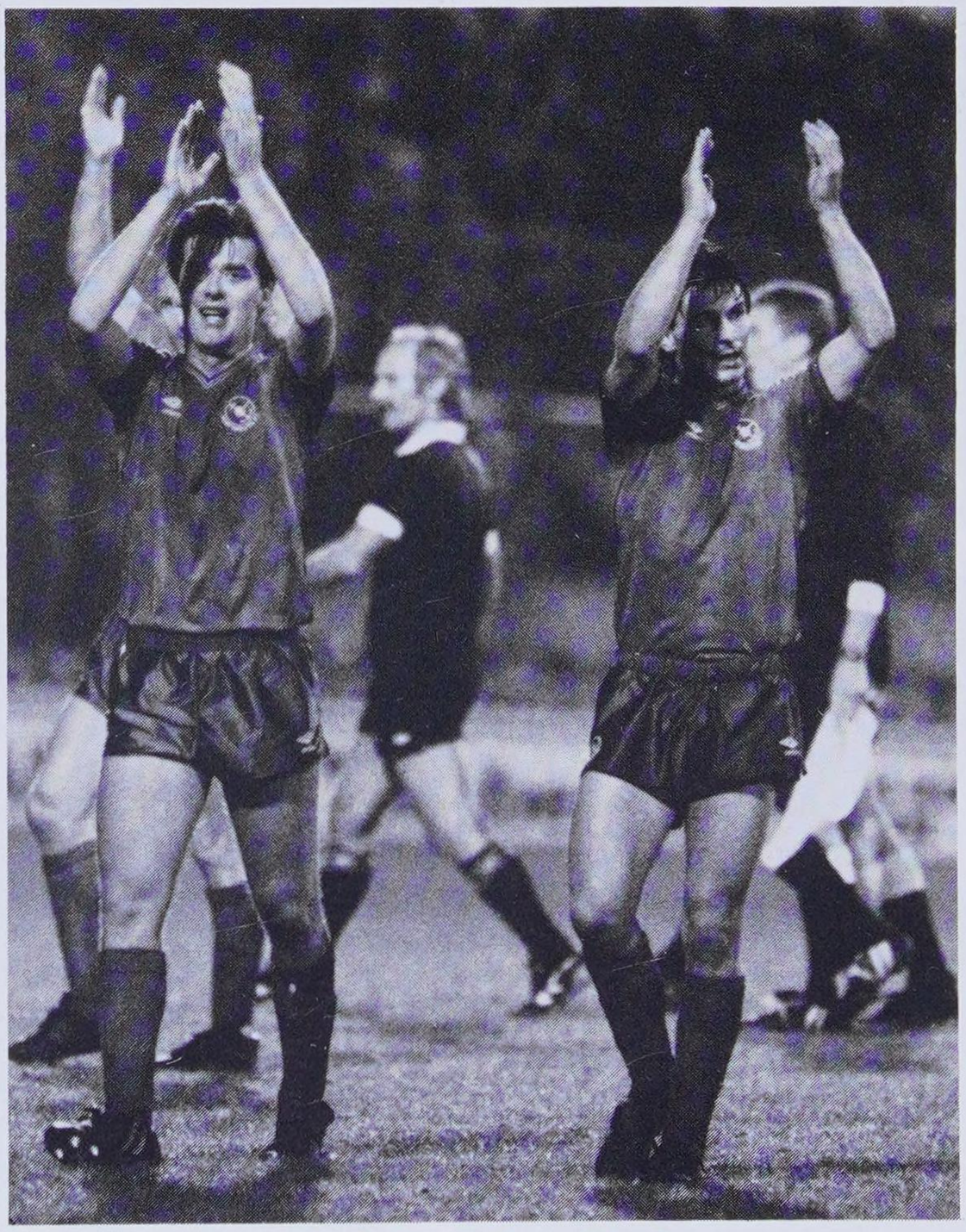
Then with ten minutes left their fate was sealed as Ray Lewington's pass unleashed Withe against an over-committed defence and as Alan Knight advanced to meet him, he laid the ball back for Foley to claim his second of the afternoon. So Pompey's once comfortable eight point lead was down to two and the pressure was on.

Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, Wood, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (McGarvey 58), Hilaire.
Sheffield United: Burridge, Eckhardt, Smith, Thompson, Stancliffe, McNaught, Morris, Edwards, Withe, Lewington, Foley. Sub, Wigley.
Referee: Mike James (Horsham).
Attendance: 17,558.

Now all thoughts turned to Wednesday and the visit of Spurs. But for two men on the payroll there were less glamorous prospects. Malcolm Waldron's hopes of being able to resume full training and playing were ended by another thumbs down from the specialist and a month with his leg in plaster. And reserve centre-forward Dave Bamber was allowed to join Fourth Division promotion chasers Swindon on loan.

Wednesday, November 27, was to go down as another of those occasions when events off the pitch threatened to undo the good done on it. Predictably the visit of Spurs drew the biggest crowd since the Saints F.A. Cup tie of two seasons earlier — but thousands were never to gain entry to the ground.

Though many had bought tickets in advance, a human traffic jam developed on the North East corner of the ground where people with tickets and people hoping to pay on the turnstiles became hopelessly entangled. With police refusing to open turnstiles which gave access to the visitors' only Milton End, there was utter confusion, anger and fear — and Pompey were left with a damaged reputation.



Clap-hands. Kev and Mick give the fans a Thank you.

Mick Channon's in ahead of Graham Roberts, Ray Clemence comes to meet him and the shot's so close that Channon's arm is raised in celebration -but in vain.

November 27
POMPEY 0, SPURS 0 (aet)
Milk Cup fourth round replay

Another night of magnificent physical endeavour and high excitement without the finishing touch of a goal. In fact as defences dominated there were few hints of a break to the deadlock.

Spurs were the better side in the first half as Pompey struggled to get Saturday's hang-over out of their system, but once they had done so, deadlock was never really threatened until full time had passed.

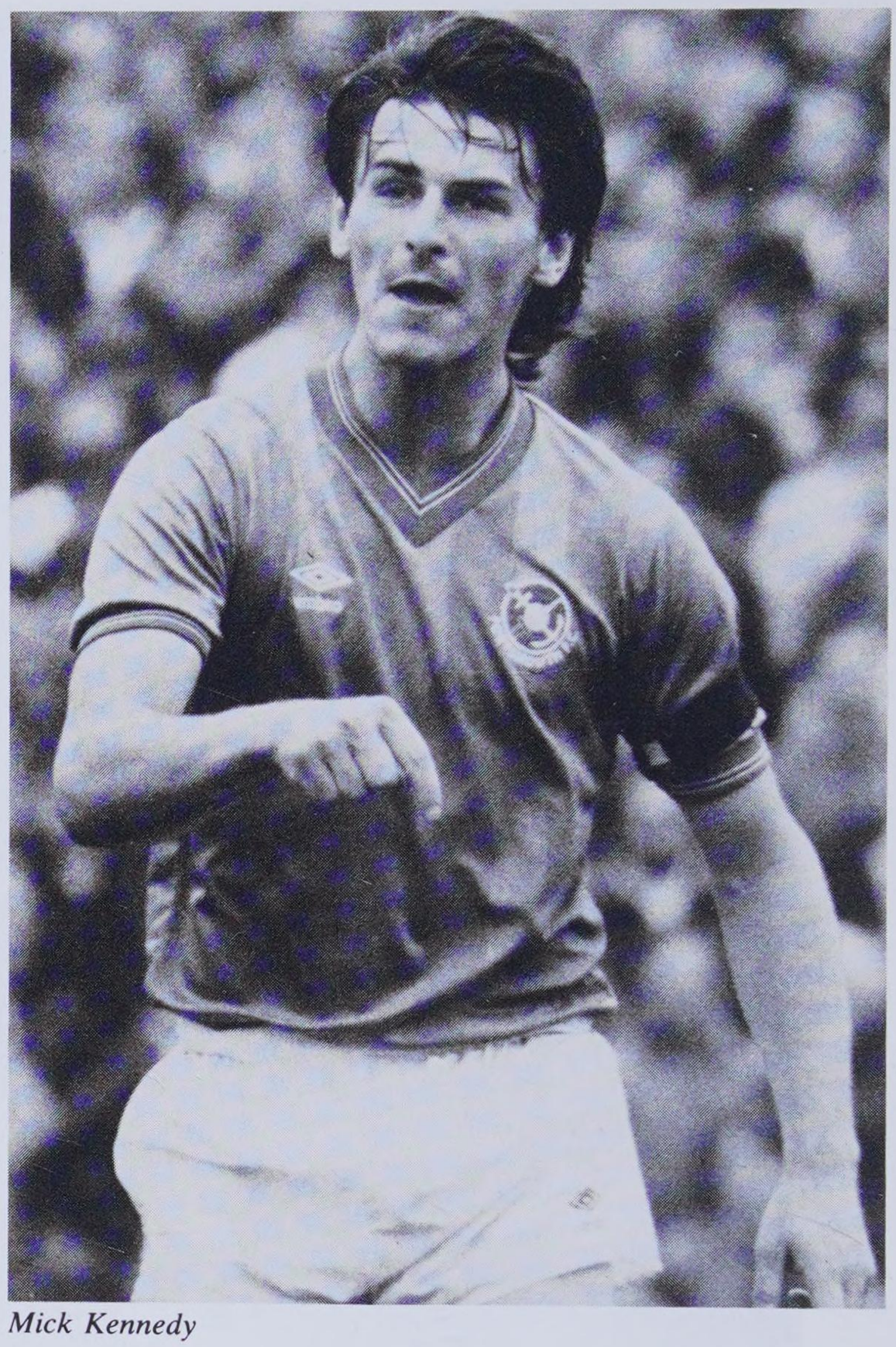
Then twice in a minute Pompey were kept in the competition and spared the heartbreak of extra time dismissal for the third year running by goal-line clearances. First Paul Hardyman hacked a shot by Mark Falco off the line and from the corner Kevin Dillon cleared Gary Stevens' header. Twice more before the end Alan Knight was to distinguish himself with sharp saves from Falco and Chris Waddle and then the action switched on to the boardroom where Pompey's chairman John Deacon won the right to stage the second meeting at Fratton.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Tait 90), Hilaire.
Spurs: Clemence, Stevens, Hughton, Roberts, Mabbutt, Perryman, Allen, Falco, Galvin, Ardiles (Thomas 75), Waddle.
Referee: Allan Gunn (Burgess Hill).
Attendance: 28,100.

After winning the toss to guarantee Pompey home advantage for the second replay, Mr. Deacon promised the crowd problems would not be repeated — but refused to accept that the club were responsible. He admitted that the match should have been made all-ticket which would have avoided the entanglement of ticketholders and people wishing to pay cash but maintained the police were responsible for gates being closed.

While the controversy raged, Pompey made their first signing of the season. Twenty-four-year old Danish international striker Tommy Christensen, who had been on trial with First Division Leicester City, joined for a month. Christensen, who had been with Spanish First Division club Elche, was keen to prove himself in England and to push his claim for a place in Denmark's World Cup squad.

He was drafted straight into the first team squad for the tricky away match against Bradford City in their temporary home at the city's massive Odsal Rugby League stadium. But at the last minute the match was postponed; a combination of snow and fog made the journey a waste of time. Christensen had to wait only until the following Tuesday to make his debut as Pompey agreed to a speedy re-scheduling of the fixture to help ease Bradford's cash-flow problems after the postponement of three successive matches.



Mick Kennedy

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
POMPEY	17	7	0	1	17	3	4	2	3	12	9	35
Sheffield U	18	3	4	2	17	12	6	2	1	20	10	33
Wimbledon	18	7	2	0	16	4	2	3	4	5	12	32
Charlton	17	6	1	1	17	7	3	3	3	14	13	31
Norwich	18	6	2	1	19	9	2	4	3	12	11	30
Crystal Palace	18	6	1	2	13	9	3	2	4	13	12	30
Blackburn	18	5	3	1	11	5	2	4	3	9	13	28
Oldham	18	6	1	2	21	16	2	2	5	9	11	27
Barnsley	18	6	2	1	13	4	1	3	5	7	11	26

POMPEY

7. December 1985

December 3
BRADFORD 2, POMPEY 1

It was to be very much a case of act in haste, regret at leisure for Alan Ball's side. The decision to travel back to Yorkshire to clear off the Bradford fixture after only three days delay was to rebound badly — and amid some controversy.

It rebounded in the performance which Pompey produced in alien conditions. Osdal's pitch was narrow and heavily grassed — and Pompey had little appetite for it or for the need to produce an all-action display to match the non-stop running of the home side. And the controversy was provided by the final act by referee Joe Worrall who ruled out an equalizer by debut-making Christensen, deeming that the little Dane's shot had not crossed the line as he sounded the final whistle.

But it was debateable whether Pompey deserved a point from a below-par performance which was punished by their fourth successive defeat and saw their lead at the top slimmed to a single point. They were behind from the ninth minute when Bobby Campbell scored from close range and although Mick Kennedy levelled in the 38th minute, firing home his first League goal for the club as Kevin O'Callaghan's corner was partially cleared, they were never at ease. In the second half they came under increasing pressure and survived desperately. In one three minute burst they escaped three times; Kevin Dillon cleared a shot off the line and then Campbell and full back Gavin Oliver hit posts. But with five minutes left Bradford's pressure paid off sensationally; a burst of four corners climaxed with former Manchester United winger Arthur Graham ripping a superb 20 yard shot into the roof of Alan Knight's net.

It was tough on Knight who had bailed Pompey out with a string of fine saves and yet in the last seconds it seemed they had escaped as Christensen whipped home a low shot only for Mr. Worrall to cut short the celebrations with his 'too late' ruling.

Bradford: Litchfield, Oliver, Withe, McCall, Jackson, Evans, Hendrie, Abbott, Campbell, Singleton, Graham. Sub, Ellis.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Christensen, Hilaire (Tait 64).
Referee: Joe Worrall (Warrington).
Attendance: 4,701.

Twenty four hours after the debacle, the reason for Paul Hardyman's contribution to a disappointing all-round defensive display was revealed. The young full back, whose career had been dogged by ill luck and injury from the moment he broke into the first team, had played with an appendicitis which was flaring. He had been back after six week absence only for a week when he was rushed into hospital on his return from Yorkshire for emergency surgery — another break in his development.

So Pompey faced a searching test of character at Sunderland with people questioning their ability to stay the course and hang on to top spot. The performance at Odsal brought inevitable changes; Kevin Dillon lost his place in midfield to the more competitive Mick Tait and up front Nicky Morgan paid the price as Ball tried a new partnership of Christensen, who with Knight had been exempt from managerial blame at Bradford, and Paul Wood.

As the players travelled to Wearside, they left behind fans assimilating the latest found of Fratton price increases. Rising costs had been answered by rising entrance fees — 20p on the terraces and seat prices up by 50p. The increases were 'minimal' and did little more than cover the cost of inflation, chairman John Deacon informed the annual meeting. He also spelled out the next round of expensive safety work at the ground — new turnstiles linked to a central counting system for easier control, re-vamped toilets and new terracing in South Enclosure.

December 7
SUNDERLAND 1, POMPEY 3

Pompey responded to their critics in sensational style as they completed an impressive double over Lawrie McMenemy's struggling side, Ball's re-vamped side with 17-year-old Lee Sandford returning for a major test of nerve as Hardyman's replacement, played as well as they had played badly at Bradford. Their football was slick, sharp and imaginative and they were cruising home three goals up by the time Sunderland had centre-half Bennett sent off for his second bookable offence.

Pompey struck for the first time midway through the first half when Christensen, whose pairing with the speedy Wood was encouragingly effective, dipped a long range volley over a surprised and hopelessly beaten Bob Bolder. They tightened their grip a minute from the interval when Kevin O'Callaghan latched on to a partial clearance and his long range effort deflected off Tait to leave Bolder flat-footed again.

The best though was yet to come; in the 65th minute Mick Kennedy's pass unleashed Wood on the left and the youngster stormed away from the defence, opted against setting up Christensen and suddenly flashed a magnificent shot past Bolder. Sunderland were now the target of their fans' abuse but after Bennett had gone, managed to take some of the sting from the terraces' anger with a late goal by the previously anonymous Eric Gates.

Sunderland: Bolder, Burley, Alan Kennedy, Pickering, Bennett, Elliott, Gayle (Atkinson), Venison, Swindlehurst, Hodgson, Gates.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Mick Kennedy, Wood, Christensen, Hilaire. Sub, Dillon.
Referee: Keith Hackett (Sheffield).
Attendance: 17,229.

It was the perfect pick-me-up for Tuesday's third clash with Spurs — but as that match approached, Ball had new problems. Goalkeeper Alan Knight had escaped serious injury in a road accident at the week-end and his mental and physical fitness for such an important match was in doubt. But his performance in training on match-day convinced Ball he was ready.

There was also a surprise bonus for Ball; he had orginally believed Christensen had signed too late to be eligible — at the last minute he discovered he was wrong and that the Dane could play. So he stuck to the side at Sunderland, giving both Christensen and Sandford their biggest character tests so far.

December 10
POMPEY 1, SPURS 0
Milk Cup fourth round, second replay

Noel Blake stole the individual glory for the goal which took Pompey into the last eight of the Milk Cup for the first time in 25 years — but it was a victory earned by a superb team effort. They beat multi-talented and ultra-expensive Spurs because they outgrafted and outfought them.

Spurs had been without the influential Glenn Hoddle in the first replay but they had him back for this one — he was again nullified by Mick Kennedy's snapping watch. Spurs also recalled million pound man Clive Allen to link with Mark Falco, but the pair got no scope from Blake and Billy Gilbert. Nor did England's new winger Chris Waddle who was unable to stamp his authority over young Sandford.

Yet in a first half which Pompey controlled, it was Spurs who created the greater danger and four times Alan Knight was to vindicate his decision to play with superb saves. Then just as it seemed another half would pass goal-less, Pompey pinched the lead as Blake outjumped Gary Mabbutt to beat Ray Clemence and Danny Thomas with a fierce header. In the time added for stoppages after Blake's 44th minute strike, Knight was to produce great saves from Falco and Hoddle.

The second half saw Pompey soak up enormous pressure and then with two minutes left almost let their lead slip as Waddle drifted a long cross shot over a for-once stranded Knight only for the ball to come back off the angle of post and bar.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Wood (Dillon 46), Christensen, Hilaire.
Spurs: Clemence, Stevens, Hughton, Roberts, Mabbutt, Thomas, Ardiles, (Paul Allen), Falco, Clive Allen, Hoddle, Waddle.
Referee: Brian Stevens (Stonehouse).
Attendance: 26,306

The reward for this victory was to be paired with Oxford United in the quarter finals. And that was not without its problems; newly promoted Oxford's little Manor Ground's capacity meant that Pompey would receive only 4,000 tickets. That was unlikely to be sufficient to meet deamnd — but their plan to ease the problems by closed circuit television to Fratton Park got nowhere. Oxford's chairman Robert Maxwell proved elusive over giving permission for the scheme and eventually it was allowed to wither and die.

But Ball's thoughts were concentrated on something else — the need to bring players' feet back to earth after Tuesday's triumph for the more mundane but more important matter of ending their disconcerting wobble in the League. Hull, their opponents on opening day of the season were the opposition — now of course including Bobby Doyle in their midfield. Ball again was forced to make changes; Paul Wood was unfit and Mick Channon returned to partner Christensen while he sprang a surprise by naming Paul Sugrue as substitute. Sugrue had returned to Fratton after an unhappy spell in Scandinavia but his call up as insurance against Kevin O'Callaghan suffering a reaction from his niggling knee injury was an out-of-the-blue affair; it was his first senior involvement in 12 months.

Pompey new boy meets Pompey old boy -
Lee Sandford comes off second best against Graham Roberts.

Tommy Christensen lets fly.

December 14
POMPEY 1, HULL CITY 1

Not the sort of match — or result — wanted on a day when prices went up. It was a drab affair, with Pompey unable to come down from Tuesday's high flying performance — and at the end of it they had lost top place for the first time as Norwich nosed ahead on goal scoring; both sides had a goal difference of plus 18 but Norwich had scored 39 to Pompey's 34.

Yet Pompey almost clung on to top place for they were nine minutes away from a victory they did not deserve when Stan McEwan practised what Ball had preached to him on the training grounds of Blackpool. When Alan Knight was penalized for straying out of his area as he cleared, McEwan, who Ball had demanded should always get free kicks on target when they were manager and player at Blackpool, did just that and drilled home a low equalizer.

Until then Pompey had looked like edging home on the back of the second goal of Christensen's four appearances. The little Dane had been as anonymous as everyone else in a drab first half but then flicked the ball home from close range as Mick Kennedy laid Kenny Swain's long cross back into the goalmouth. But McEwan then saw that it did not earn a win bonus and for the last few minutes Hull held out with ten men after skipper Gareth Roberts had been sent off for an incident involving Kennedy.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, (Sugrue 79), Kennedy, Channon, Christensen, Hilaire.
Hull: Norman, Jobson, Swann, Doyle, Skipper, McEwan, Williams (Flounders), Bunn, Saville, Askew, Roberts.
Referee: Keith Miller (Harlow).
Attendance: 13,596.

Christensen's appearance against Hull marked the end of his trial period and with two goals in four matches, plus that disallowed equalizer at Bradford, seemed to have made out a case for a long-term contract. Yet Ball hesitated — and as events were to turn out, the Hull match was to be Christensen's last outing in England. A rib injury prevented him playing at Carlisle on the pre-Christmas Sunday and he was eventually to be allowed to drift back to Denmark. Meanwhile the Oxford Milk Cup quarter final was continuing to occupy many thoughts.

Lack of progress over the television idea persuaded Mr. Deacon to write to the Football League proposing that the tie should be played on a neutral ground with a capacity to cope with the people likely to want to see it. That idea, not surprisingly, was laughed out of court from Oxford who were not prepared to yield home advantage.

Christensen's injury meant a return for Nicky Morgan at Carlisle. Morgan had been dropped after a run of five matches without a goal but was still the Second Division's top marksman with 14 goals.

December 22
CARLISLE 0, POMPEY 1

One of those days when the result was the thing which mattered most — and was just what Pompey needed after a run which had brought only four points from six matches.

Conditions ensured it would be no classic; a week of torrential rain had left the Brunton Park pitch a mud heap. In fact pumps had been used in the morning to clear water which had been lying in one penalty area. So cultured football was out of the question — hit and chase were the orders of the day. Pompey eventually claimed their 13th win of the season with a late strike by Mick Channon. It came

Mates - but not today. Mick Tait and his closest friend Bobby Doyle.

in the 75th minute with a glancing header which squirted past a defender on the goal-line. It also ended a sense of injustice which had been with Pompey for an hour since a linesman had ruled that Morgan's looping header against the inside of a post had not crossed the line before it had been hooked clear. But the match was expensive as Micky Kennedy and Kevin O'Callaghan collected the bookings which meant a two match suspension.

Carlisle: Endersby, Lomax, McCartney, Ashurst, Saunders, Halsall, Mayes, (Hill), Cooke, Baker, Bishop, Halpin.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Referee: Ken Redfern (Whitley Bay).
Attendance: 4,225.

And so to Boxing Day and their derby meeting with Brighton — it was not to prove a very happy Christmas.

December 26
POMPEY 1, BRIGHTON 2

Pompey again found it impossible to recapture the sparkle and fire which Fratton Park had inspired in them in the first three months of the season. They played well enough in bursts without really doing themselves full justice. And to the disbelief of a disappointingly small holiday crowd tossed everything away by conceding two dreadful goals.

There was also another disciplinary debit — another player booking himself a two match ban. This was Kevin Dillon. Recalled to midfield as Ball switched Mick Tait to full back to rest young Lee Sandford, Dillon went through the 21 point barrier for a foul on Danny Wilson. The match was 18 tough minutes old when Billy Gilbert made the error which gifted Brighton the lead. His back-pass was underhit, Justin Fashanu and Alan Knight both went for it and the ball broke for Dean Saunders to hammer home his eighth goal of the season.

But in the 32nd minute Pompey were level. They looked for a penalty when Eric Young brought down Nicky Morgan but their anger at getting an indirect free kick disappeared as Kevin O'Callaghan ran on to Dillon's short pass and thrashed it through the defensive wall and goalkeeper Perry Digweed's legs to level.

After an uncertain start to the second half, Pompey gained the initiative without really looking like taking the lead and then late on conceded another soft goal. They lost possession in the centre circle and Gary O'Reilly's long through ball caught their defence off balance, again Fashanu challenged Knight and again the ball broke loose, this time for Terry Connor to hit an empty net to give Brighton their second victory in ten visits to Fratton.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Sugrue 82), Hilaire.
Brighton: Digweed, Jacobs, Pearce, Wilson, Young, O'Reilly, Saunders, Penney, Fashanu, Connor, Mortimer. Sub, Gatting.
Referee: Lester Shapter (Torquay).
Attendance: 15,265.

Pompey had an immediate opportunity to get that defeat out of their system and check their fans' growing concern with the visit of Shrewsbury to Fratton two days later — and thanks to a late flurry of goals they achieved their objective.

December 28
POMPEY 4, SHREWSBURY 0

It was very much a case of all's well that ends well. Pompey drew the curtain on 1985 with a burst of four goals — a welcome return to scoring form after a difficult, lean period. Yet they had to wait until the last 11 minutes to grab three of them to underline their superiority over a battling Shrewsbury side.

Until then they had been leading by Mick Kennedy's first Fratton goal. That had come in the 32nd minute when Pompey's skipper pounced as goalkeeper Steve Perks could only beat out a long cross by Kevin Dillon — and the goal stood despite Shrewbury's protest that Kennedy had handled in bringing the ball under control.

After that, with the icy pitch causing everyone problems, it looked like drifting to a tame end until Paul Wood, back in the side in preference to Morgan, sparked the action packed close as he latched on to a miscued back pass and lifted it over Perks. That was in the 79th minute — seven minutes later and Mick Channon was arm-whirling his celebration of another goal as he glanced a glorious header into the top corner. Still Pompey weren't finished and in the 88th minute Wood swept home Vince Hilaire's cross from close range — a spectacular end to the year if somewhat harsh on a game Shrewsbury.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Tait, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Channon, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Shrewsbury: Perks, Gunn, Hughes, Cross, Pearson, Griffin, Leonard, Hackett, Stevens, Robinson, Daly. Sub, McNally.
Referee: John Moules (Ingatestone).
Attendance: 12,302.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	23	9	2	1	31	11	4	4	3	17	12	45
POMPEY	23	8	1	2	23	6	6	2	4	17	12	45
Wimbledon	24	8	3	1	23	9	4	3	5	9	14	42
Charlton	22	9	1	1	24	7	3	3	5	16	18	40
Sheffield U	24	4	5	3	20	15	6	2	4	21	19	37
Barnsley	24	8	2	2	17	7	2	5	5	9	12	37
Brighton	24	6	3	3	26	17	5	1	6	16	19	37
Crystal Palace	23	6	1	4	14	13	4	4	4	16	14	35

POMPEY

8. January 1986

January 1
WIMBLEDON 1, POMPEY 3

New Year's Day brought Pompey's first meeting with Wimbledon, the long ball specialists who were the surprise members of the promotion pack. They knew what to expect at Plough Lane — and Ball was confident his side could meet the challenge. In the end, after one or two difficult moments, he was proved right and the man who did the proving was Mick Channon. Only too aware that his managerial mate was stepping up his search for the player to replace him in the side, Channon grabbed two classy goals, his third and fourth in four matches, to ease Pompey back into top place — at least until Norwich had won at Fulham in the afternoon.

The first ten minutes looked ominous for Pompey as Wimbledon launched their traditional bombardment which saw Alan Cork bounce a header off the bar and Noel Blake and Kevin Dillon block efforts on the line. But in the 28th minute Channon unveiled a goal of stunning quality; he ran on to Vince Hilaire's return pass and from 25 yards left Dave Beasant grasping thin air with a magnificent shot. Within a minute Dillon had performed another goal-line rescue act to preserve the lead and then Pompey tightened their grip as Paul Wood was put through by Billy Gilbert and eased a shot across Besant which Hilaire whipped home.

Again Wimbledon stormed back, again they were denied, this time by Mick Kennedy's goal-line clearance. Pompey's third goal and Channon's second came four minutes into the second half when he met Kennedy's cross from the left and looped a superb header into the far top corner. This time Wimbledon's retaliation was rewarded with Cork powering Lawrie Sanchez's cross past Knight — but that was to be their only success as Noel Blake produced another king-sized performance to frustrate the Londoners' attempt to batter their way back into the match.

Wimbledon: Beasant, Kay, Winterburn, Downes, Martin, Thorn, Evans, Cork, Holloway (Wise), Sanchez, Hodges.
Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Channon, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Referee: Michael Reed (Birmingham).
Attendance: 9,025.

Alan Ball did not hang around Plough Lane long to savour a result and performance which gave him particular satisfaction — he shot away quickly to get to Fulham and watch Dean Coney.

But his mission was fruitless; Fulham rested the England under 21 centre-forward who Ball believed could be the player his attack needed. It was to be a short-lived interest though. Fulham, heading towards the Third Division and harried by debts, put a £350,000 price tag on Coney's head and Mr. Deacon declined to do business.

But Ball could not have had a better lift for the visit of Aston Villa in the F.A. Cup than the performance at Wimbledon. And what a frantic, controversial affair that was to prove.

January 4
POMPEY 2, ASTON VILLA 2
F.A. Cup third round

Aston Villa had improbably escaped a Milk Cup thrashing on their last visit to Fratton in 1983 with two last gasp goals — now they did it again. There was less than a minute left of a furious, often bitter cup tie, when Paul Birch grabbed Villa's equalizer. It was an improbable escape for the struggling First Division side who had been outplayed for long periods of a match of frenzied action.

But again it was a costly exercise for Pompey; lucky to have Mick Tait stay on the pitch for an angry kick at Simon Stainrod, they then had Billy Gilbert sent off for an off-the-ball incident involving Stainrod. Referee Colin Downey also booked six other players as tempers were often paper thin and tackles often high and wild.

Pompey dominated the first half yet troubled Nigel Spink only once when he had to get down sharply to beat away Kevin O'Callaghan's fierce free kick — and then five minutes from the interval Villa poached a simple lead. Pompey cleared a free kick, but the ball was intercepted 20 yards out by Birch who drifted it over Alan Knight's head and when it flew clear off the bar, Horndean-raised Paul Kerr nodded into an empty net.

Vinnie does his sliding act - and his celebrating bit - again.

Picture Ian Gledhill

The lead lasted until the 57th minute and then Villa old boy Noel Blake, who like Pompey's other former Villa man Kenny Swain, had an outstanding match, levelled with a brave header. Almost immediately Gilbert was gone and Pompey regrouped; Mick Tait moved into the middle of the defence, Mick Kennedy to full back to dominate Mark Walters and then Gary Stanley replaced O'Callaghan to provide extra power in midfield. Further controversy swirled round referee Downey's head in the 69th minute as he punished Kerr's challange on Paul Wood by awarding a penalty from which Kevin Dillon blasted Pompey in front. It looked enough to see Pompey into the fourth round but then with seconds remaining Walters finally eluded Kennedy, Swain missed the cross and Birch's shot trickled gently into the net.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, (Stanley 65), Kennedy, Channon, Wood, Hilaire.
Aston Villa: Spink, Norton, Dorigo, Evans, Elliott, Birch, Kerr, Stainrod, Gray, Hodge, Walters. Sub, Glover.
Referee: Colin Downey (Hounslow).
Attendance: 17,732.

The replay was set for the following Wednesday when Pompey would have to cover the absence through suspension of Kevin O'Callaghan and Mick Kennedy. Ball drafted Lee Sandford, Paul Sugrue and Kevin Russell into his squad — then had the decision taken out of his hands as snow and ice claimed the match.

By the time Saturday came with the visit of Fulham to Fratton, Ball also had to contend with a third absentee — Kevin Dillon had joined O'Callaghan and Kennedy in suspension. Yet where Sandford had been expected to play in the replay had it gone ahead, Ball this time recalled Gary Stanley at full back and drafted Mick Tait into midfield.

There was one major surprise though, he decided to use Kevin Ball as Dillon's replacement and gave Paul Sugrue his first full home appearance in 13 months as O'Callaghan's stand in. Fulham's visit also gave Ball a close-up chance to assess Dean Coney.

January 11
POMPEY 1, FULHAM 1

Fulham had cruelly embarrassed Pompey on their previous visit to Fratton Park 12 months earlier when they clawed their way back from four down to grab a draw which many people reckoned was the day that eventually cost Pompey promotion.

Now they came close to inflicting even greater humiliation. Second from bottom, with only a single away win and four goals to their credit, they got within four minutes of beating a Pompey side who struggled to put two passes together. Ball was highly critical of his side's performance afterwards — and critical of the fans who had destroyed young Ball's confidence as he struggled to come to grips with a position in which he had no experience.

Coney, the centre of so much interest and speculation, did his valuation no harm with a classic centre-forward's goal in the 19th minute. He got above everyone to meet John Marshall's cross and powered a fine header into the top corner of the net. Thanks to some smart goalkeeping by Gerry Peyton and some indifferent finishing, that goal looked good enough to earn Fulham their win bonus until in the 86th minute Mick Tait grabbed his first goal of the season. His close header range finally beat Peyton and spared Pompey complete embarrassment.
Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Swain, Ball, Blake, Gilbert, Sugrue (Morgan 64), Tait, Channon, Wood, Hilaire.
Fulham: Peyton, Cottington, Donnellan, Scott, Parker, Hopkins, Marshall, Achampong, Coney, Carr, Barnett. Sub, Fishenden.
Referee: Robert Hamer (Bristol).
Attendance: 13,666.

Now there was further transfer speculation. This time Steve Williams, Arsenal's former England and Southampton midfield man, was its target. Ball had stirred up the talk by mentioning his admiration for his old team mate and his failure to gain regular employment at Highbury.

But again it was still-born; again the asking price was a deterrent and Mr. Deacon made it clear Williams would not be returning to Hampshire. As the Williams talk swirled around Pompey had to face up to their replay at Villa Park.

They were still without their suspended trio and Kevin Ball's problems against Fulham had further reduced his manager's options. He included 18-year-old winger Martin Roderick in his squad for the first time, but in the end decided against pitching the Purbrook youngster into such a demanding debut. Sandford was recalled at left back allowing Stanley to move into midfield with Tait, and McGarvey got a surprise call to deputize for O'Callaghan — his first full outing for 11 months.

Cliff Carr gets that Sinbad feeling as Gary Stanley hitches a lift.

January 13
ASTON VILLA 3, POMPEY 2 (aet)
F.A. Cup third round replay

Pompey bowed out of the F.A. Cup with heads high — and with their fans feeling they had seen it all before. The first match at Fratton seemed like 1983 revisited as Villa forced an improbable replay with a late, late goal — now the second installment was like another flashback. Again the match went into extra time — again Pompey suffered a serious injury.

Two seasons earlier, Richard Money had collected the injury which effectively ended his career with Pompey; this time Alan Knight broke his right hand and put himself out of the reckoning for six weeks. An uncertain start to the match saw Pompey gradually gain the upper hand only for Villa to poach the lead shortly before the interval when Knight's challenge with Mark Walters for a loose ball was penalized by referee Tony Ward to allow Allan Evans to hammer home the penalty.

For much of the second half, although Pompey played enterprisingly, it seemed that harsh award would decide the match but then Stanley, who had had a powerful match in the midfield role he preferred, ran on to Evans' clearance of Sandford's cross and blasted the match into extra time. But inside ten minutes it seemed the tie had been put cruelly beyond Pompey. First Knight allowed Kerr's long range drive to bounce off his chest and before he could recover, Steve Hodge had whipped the ball into the middle for Stainrod to tap home. Seven minutes later and it was 3-1. Knight was beaten to a bouncing ball by Stainrod, the striker nodded the ball gently into the empty net and the goalkeeper was left clutching his shattered right hand after punching the Villa man's head. He continued after lengthy treatment yet was not to touch the ball again as Pompey spent the remainder of the match storming forward.

Less than a minute after the turn-round and they were back in the hunt. Paul Wood forced home Scott McGarvey's cross after further good work by the composed and confident Sandford only for Pompey to see it ruled out in return for a penalty which Stanley jubilantly blasted home. The final 14 minutes must have been endless for Villa's fans as Pompey swarmed around their goal, winning five corners and in the last seconds it seemed Vince Hilaire must force a second replay but somehow Nigel Spink got down to his bottom corner to produce a superb save and deny the Second Division side a prize they deserved.

Aston Villa: Spink, Norton, Dorigo, Evans, Elliott, Birch, Kerr, Stainrod, Gray, Hodge, Walters. Sub, Glover.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Stanley, Blake, Gilbert, McGarvey, Tait, Channon (Morgan 78), Wood, Hilaire.
Referee: Tony Ward (London).
Attendance: 14,958.

Knight's injury was diagnosed as a fractured bone and was to end his sequence of 129 consecutive appearances since he displaced Peter Mellor as first choice keeper back in August 1981. It also left Ball without goalkeeping cover for Andy Gosney and that prompted the rapid signing of Jake Findlay from Peterborough United as deputy. It also meant Gosney stepping into the firing line for the visit to leaders Norwich while Mick Tait changed shirts yet again — to deputize for the now suspended Billy Gilbert alongside Noel Blake.

But the trio who had missed Fulham and Aston Villa — Kevin O'Callaghan, Mick Tait and Kevin Dillon — were all available again and that meant no more than substitute stand-by for Stanley, their two goal hero of Villa Park.

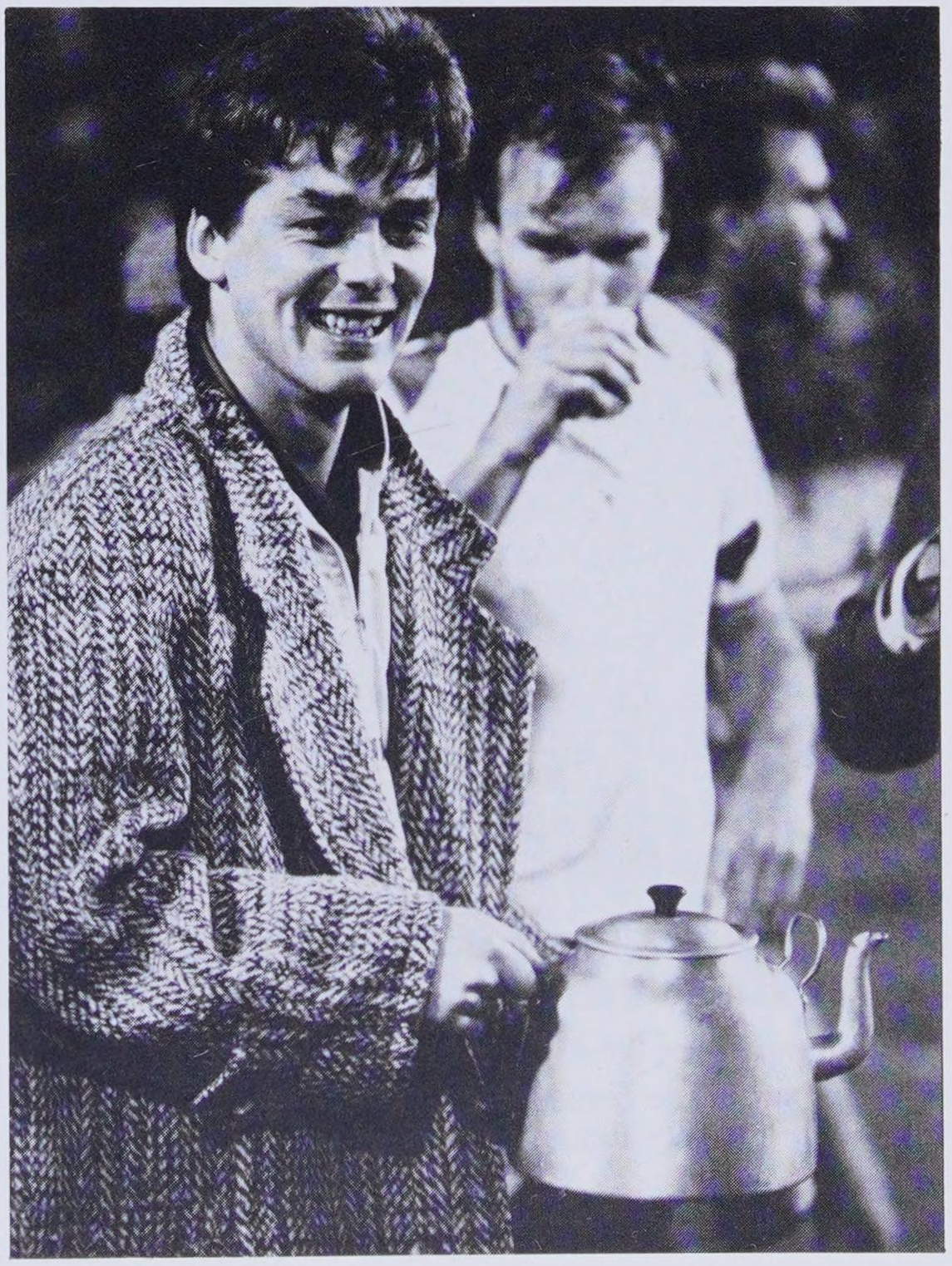
While all this was going on Swindon were debating whether to meet Pompey's £25,000 asking price for Dave Bamber against an angry backdrop. Alan Ball was maintaining that the Wiltshire club were trying to clinch promotion on the cheap by borrowing a string of players — Lou Macari maintaining that Pompey were profiteering by asking £5,000 more than they paid for the big striker. And the week also brought final confirmation of the end of Mick Baxter's days as a professional footballer. After lengthy negotiations Pompey and their club captain reached agreement on a settlement of his contract.

Pyramid-building at Villa Park.

Gary Stanley's penalty-style.

Honest guv. I never touched him.

Tea boy!



Downed Gos. But at least the ball's outside.

January 18
NORWICH CITY 2, POMPEY 0

For the second time in the week Pompey were left to look back at a great deal of hard work denied any reward by late goals. Their meeting with the side who had replaced them as favourites for the title was fought with the intensity of a cup tie and although short on quality football, compensated with its ferocity. Pompey looked the sharper side in the first half but could achieve little although Mick Channon did stretch Chris Woods into one fine save.

Norwich twice saw young Gosney calm his nerves with good saves and were foiled when Kevin Drinkell beat him with a back heel as Vince Hilaire popped up to clear off the line. Everything seemed to be heading for goal-less stalemate until in the 77th minute Lee Sandford's concentration lapsed briefly, Mark Barham for once eluded him to crack home Mike Phelan's long cross.

Now Pompey were under seige; Gosney produced two more good saves, was reprieved by Kenny Swain's improbable goal-line clearance from Peter Mendham and then with four minutes left cracked as Barham's low cross induced confusion in their defence and Drinkell poached his 16th goal of the season.

Norwich: Woods, Culverhouse, Van Wyk, Bruce, Phelan, Watson, Barham, Drinkell, Biggins, Mendham, Williams. Sub, Brooke.
Pompey: Gosney, Swain, Sandford, Dillon, Blake, Tait, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Channon, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Referee: Noel Butler (East Molesey).
Attendance: 20,129.

But Pompey and their fans had the Milk Cup quarter final to offer immediate consolation after that defeat — instead there was a totally demoralizing exit.

January 22
OXFORD UNITED 3, POMPEY I
Milk Cup quarter final

Pompey have often been accused over the years of building up their fans to only disappoint — this was the kind of night which gave birth to those charges. Pompey had outlasted Spurs to reach the last eight; now they crumbled abjectly against a side who were just recovering from a First Division humiliation by Spurs. Such is football.

The ground was cruelly cut from beneath Ball's men almost before they had trodden on it; less than two minutes into the match and a long range shot by Les Philips hit Oxford centre-half Gary Briggs in the middle of the back as he took evasive action. Andy Gosney was committed and in full flight one way as the ball arced fatally into the other corner. It was demoralizing and for the rest of the half that was exactly what Pompey were as Oxford produced a quality of football they could not answer.

Yet it took a moment's indecision by Lee Sandford who had earlier kept them afloat with two magnificent tackles, to kill of any hope which lingered among their 4,000 fans. The youngster hesitated down in the corner and before he could clear, Ray Houghton had nipped the ball away from him and his cross had been blasted home by Phillips.

The second half was completely one-sided yet produced only one more Oxford goal, a long range free kick by Neil Slatter which asked awkward questions of Pompey's defence and then in the last seconds Gary Stanley, who had replaced Sandford at the interval, sounded their lone defiance with a 30 yard drive into the top corner; but it was an irrelevance. This was very much Oxford's night.

Oxford: Judge, Trewick, Slatter, Phillips, Briggs, Shotton, Houghton, Aldridge, Charles (Jones 69), Hebberd, Brock.
Pompey: Gosney, Swain, Sandford (Stanley 46), Dillon, Blake, Tait, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Channon, Wood, Hilaire.
Referee: Neville Ashley (Nantwich).
Attendance: 10,334.

Vince again - this time off the deck.

Oooh. Mick Channon and Steve Bruce in close harmony.

As Pompey sought to re-build their confidence, Dave Bamber returned frustrated from his successful loan spell with Swindon after the breakdown of negotiations for his permanent transfer and he was passed in the door by Tommy Christensen who returned to Denmark hoping to do enough in a few matches with Velje to force his way into his country's World Cup squad. Scott McGarvey also headed out, joining relation-threatened Carlisle on a month's loan. Exit from the F.A. Cup provided Pompey with a chance to clear their long-delayed meeting with Middlesbrough off their list.

January 25
POMPEY 1, MIDDLESBROUGH 0

Nicky Morgan was the most satisfied of a lot of satisfied people as Pompey chalked up their first win since New Year's Day. It was an unspectacular match but Morgan, out of the reckoning since Boxing Day, got the only goal. Until Morgan moved from the 14 goal tally on which he had been marooned since November 2 at Leeds, the man with most to be pleased about was Andy Gosney.

He had waited a long time for his home debut but within a few minutes of starting it had made a superb full length save from Gary Rowell and then got a foot to an effort by Archie Stevens. Pompey struggled to impose any authority on the scrappy action but then in the 74th minute Morgan for once slipped 'Boro's' tight marking and forced Mick Kennedy's pass through Eric McManus's dive to settle the match and keep Pompey seven points clear of third-placed Wimbledon.

Pompey: Gosney, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Middlesbrough: McManus, Laws, McAndrew (Beagrie), Mowbray, O'Riordan, Pallister, Hamilton, Heard, Slaven, Stephens, Rowell.
Referee: Ron Groves (Weston Super Mare).
Attendance: 10,611.

Still transfer-talk dominated the clubs and pubs of Portsmouth; would Pompey move to finally use the time Mick Channon had bought in their search for a striker with a long-term future? But still the price would not match up to Pompey's standards.

There was more frustration for Ball when he saw 18-year-old Wigan striker Warren Aspinall join Everton for £200,000. Ball had inquired about the teenage prodigy and had been gazzumped by his old mate Howard Kendall at Goodison. And it had been the same when he had inquired about Barnsley's 18-year-old striker David Hirst whose asking price was around a quarter of a million.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	27	11	2	1	35	11	6	4	3	20	13	57
POMPEY	27	9	2	2	25	7	7	2	5	20	15	22
Wimbledon	27	9	3	2	27	12	4	3	6	10	16	45
Charlton	24	10	1	1	28	7	3	3	6	17	20	43
Brighton	26	7	4	3	31	20	5	1	6	16	19	41
Hull	27	8	4	2	30	13	3	4	6	16	25	41
Sheffield U	27	5	5	3	21	15	6	2	6	23	25	40
Crystal Palace	27	7	1	5	17	16	4	5	5	16	16	39
Stoke	27	5	8	1	22	13	4	3	6	16	22	38
Barnsley	27	8	2	3	18	11	2	5	7	9	17	37
Blackburn	25	7	3	1	15	5	2	5	7	14	27	35

Swinger. Blakie flails, there's little contact and in the end it trickles against the post

POMPEY

9. February 1986

February 1
POMPEY 4, HUDDERSFIELD 1

A late flurry of goals gave Pompey's Oxford-dented confidence a welcome boost in a far from memorable match against old rivals Huddersfield. For a long time it seemed Pompey might have to be content with Mick Tait's first half goal for three more points. But then a needlessly conceded penalty gave Kevin Dillon the chance to make it 2-0 and from that moment Pompey threatened to run riot. Tait's goal had come midway through the first half as he nodded the ball home after Vince Hilaire's effort had come back off the bar.

After that it was very ordinary until in the 62nd minute Hilaire's heels were clicked by Simon Webster and Dillon tucked away the penalty. From that moment Pompey began to look like a side heading places. Morgan clinically claimed his 16th goal of the season when Paul Wood's pass bounced kindly for him off the referee and then Kevin O'Callaghan climaxed a magnificent run with the fourth. There were only eight minutes left when a sliced clearance by Noel Blake wrong-footed Gosney and allowed Dale Tempest to force home Huddersfield's lone reply.

Pompey: Gosney, Tait, Swain, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Huddersfield: Cox, Brown, Bray, Doyle, Webster, Jones, Wilson, Stanton (Curran), Tempest, Raynor, Cork.
Referee: David Axcell (Southend).
Attendance: 10,936.

Again it was victory at a price; Billy Gilbert had collected a booking and was due for his second two match suspension of the season. At the same time manager Ball was also fighting disciplinary problems. He had been reported to the F.A. for remarks made to a linesman during the Villa F.A. Cup replay and had been banned from the touchline and fined £250. He had lodged an immediate appeal against both.

The weather now intervened; the visit to Crystal Palace fell victim to snow and ice and a second Saturday passed with Pompey kicking their heels as scheduled opponents Millwall were involved in an F.A. Cup tie with Saints.

But things were less than quiet; Pompey were involved in a long-running wrangle with A.C. Milan over a £150,000 installment of Mark Hateley's transfer fee. It had been due at the turn of the year but a power struggle at Milan had delayed it and John Deacon was making strenous efforts to prise the money out of the Italians. If they could not pay, then Pompey would gladly take Hateley back, he told them.

In the end Mr. Deacon sent his solicitor to Milan and the matter was quickly settled with Milan paying interest — and Pompey's expenses. On top of that they also agreed to Pompey visiting Milan for a friendly. There was also another boost for Lee Sandford — his recognition by England as he was called into the international youth squad. The weather finally relented towards the end of the month and Pompey were able to fit in their match against Oldham — only to end wishing they had not bothered to struggle to get their pitch fit.

What can I say, except sorry! Referee David Axcell apologises for the 'pass' which set up the 'submerged' Nicky Morgan for his 16th and final goal of the season.

Brian Cox pressured by Noel Blake turns Vince Hilaire's shot against his bar; Joey Jones heads out

Penalty perfection. Kevin Dillon sends Brian Cox the wrong way for Pompey's second.

Goram's again by guesswork - and Dill pays.

February 22

POMPEY 1, OLDHAM ATHLETIC 2

A late handling error by Andy Gosney allowed Oldham to claim an unlikely double and heightened Pompey supporters' growing misgivings. In came in the 76th minute of a match dominated by the frozen and treacherous pitch which always inhibitted players' movement and ambition. But his was not the only mistake; there was another by Kevin Dillon. Dillon's penalty touch deserted him and Andy Goram, the English-born goalkeeper who had opted to play for Scotland, got down well to save his kick immediately after the interval.

At that stage Pompey were trailing to an early goal by Bob Colville whose half hit shot had bobbled cruelly past Gosney. Eventually Vince Hilaire pulled them level with a spectacular overhead shot which finally defeated Goram and Pompey at least seemed to be heading for a point.

Then Gosney, no doubt chilled to the marrow in a biting wind, failed to hang on to a gently struck shot by Mick Quinn, so soon to become a member of the Fratton dressing room, and Tony Henry gleefully blasted the winner into the empty net.

Pompey: Gosney, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Tait, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Wood, Hilaire. Sub, Stanley.
Oldham Athletic: Goram, Hoolickin, Barlow, Jones, Linighan, Smith, Williams, McGuire, Colville (Quinn), Futcher, Henry.
Referee: Keith Cooper (Pontypridd).
Attendance: 10,891.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	29	11	2	1	35	11	7	5	3	25	15	61
POMPEY	29	10	2	3	30	10	7	2	5	20	15	55
Charlton	27	10	2	1	30	9	4	4	6	20	21	48
Wimbledon	28	9	4	2	27	12	4	3	6	10	16	46
Sheffield U	28	6	5	3	24	15	6	2	6	23	25	43
Brighton	29	7	4	3	31	20	5	3	7	18	24	43
Crystal Palace	29	7	2	5	18	17	5	5	5	18	17	43
Hull	28	8	4	2	30	13	3	5	6	18	27	42
Stoke	30	6	9	1	23	13	4	3	7	16	26	42
Barnsley	29	8	3	3	20	13	3	5	7	11	17	41
Grimsby	29	9	3	3	28	16	1	5	8	16	27	38

High-kicking Mick.

Mick Tait gets to grips with Andy Goram.

One for the fan in the anorak's album; he's the first to celebrate Vince Hilaire's goal.

Goram's by a fist.

The week held two pieces of good news for Alan Ball — and one bitter disappointment. The good were the recovery of Alan Knight from his injury and the inclusion of Lee Sandford in the England youth team which beat the Republic of Ireland. The bad concerned a daring plan to reinforce his ailing strike force. Baulked by the sky high valuation of the strikers he wanted, Ball instead hit on the idea of borrowing million pound man Clive Allen from Spurs. But the move was torpedoed before it was off the ground by a premature leak of the attempt. And so the latest bid was frustrated. Knight's recovery meant the end of Andy Gosney's run in the team — a none too happy experience for the youngster from Southampton. But Knight's return was not to be a winning one at Blackburn, the scene of their bitter F.A. Cup exit the previous year.

POMPEY

10. March 1986

March 1
BLACKBURN ROVERS 1, POMPEY 0

A match which did little for soccer's image — or for Pompey's claim to a promotion spot. It was a mean, often over-physical battle which saw Pompey yield three more points. Again the teams were presented with a pitch which was only just playable and which sowed the seeds of doubt over footholds and the ability to turn in everyone's mind.

The only goal came early in second half; a sliced clearance by Kevin O'Callaghan imparting enough spin on the ball to defeat Mick Tait's attempt to intercept, leaving Jimmy Quinn unchallenged to set up Simon Garner to score. Pompey followed that by creating their only worthwhile chances of a disappointing afternoon. Vince Hilaire dragged a close range shot across the face of goal and then Kevin Dillon hit the side netting. After that all was sterility and niggle.

Blackburn: Gennoe, Branagan, Rathbone, Barker, Keeley, Fazackerly, Miller, Hamilton, Quinn, Garner, Patterson. Sub, Ainscow.
Pompey: Knight, Stanley, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Tait, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 75), Hilaire.
Referee: Kieron Barrett (Coventry).
Attendance: 4,980.

The new week opened with two more disappointments for manager Ball. One though was partial. That followed his appearance before the F.A. disciplinary committee to appeal against his touchline ban and fine. The fine stayed but the banishment to the stand was cut in half and he would have to watch six matches from a-far. The other frustration was the failure of yet another striking inquiry. This time his target was another Danish international — another Christensen. This Christensen — Flemming — fancied a spell in England and Ball was prepared to offer it. But, not surprisingly, despite his target's reputation and membership of Denmark's international squad, Ball wanted to see what he was getting. He offered Christensen a trial period with a view to a permanent signing; Christensen, somewhat affronted, took himself off to Switzerland instead.

But the pressure to recruit someone to bolster an attack which had lost its edge, was mounting and Ball switched his sights to Leeds United's former England under 21 striker Andy Ritchie. Yet again there was bitter disappointment. Ritchie was available at a modest £50,000 and was keen to swap Elland Road for Fratton Park. But with everything agreed, a training session proved counter-productive. A knee injury flared and by the time Ritchie went for his routine medical, the knee was swollen — Ball took the experts' advice and killed the deal on the Thursday; a decision which sparked an angry exchange with Billy Bremmer who promptly named Ritchie in his squad for the weekend's match — although significantly, not playing him.

The most important thing though was that Ritchie had not come and Ball once again had to perm his existing players for the visit of Barnsley to Fratton. But he had Billy Gilbert available again after suspension. Yet by the time the match started Ball had finally added a goal-scorer to his pack — Mick Quinn. This time the deal went through without hitch; Oldham, desperate for ready money, had asked £150,000 for the 23-year-old — Pompey, desperate for goals, had agreed to pay.

So Quinn, who had been expecting to play at Grimsby, instead found himself watching from the Fratton directors' box, already a Pompey player. He brought an impressive record from Lancashire-a goal virtually every other appearance for Wigan, Stockport and Oldham. While Quinn was coming, Dave Bamber was moving out for the last time. Pompey and Swindon finally reached a compromise fee — around £15,000 — and Bamber added his height and weight to the Wiltshire's club push for a return to the Third Division.

Wouldn't you look startled . . . .

Referee Kieron Barrett gets down to it.

March 8
POMPEY 1, BARNSLEY 1

If Mick Quinn had wondered why Pompey were prepared to invest so much in his talents, this match left him in no doubt. He watched Pompey enjoy enormous possession against a Barnsley side content to sit back and challenge Ball's men to break them down and threaten on the counter.

That threat on the break was underlined in the 23rd minute when Barnsley stunned the season's smallest League gate so far by taking the lead. Ian Walsh broke away in pursuit of a long clearance, drifted through Billy Gilbert's challenge and curled his shot past Alan Knight. Twelve minutes later Pompey were level. For once they had something for which to thank referee Colin Downey, an official who had been involved in his fair share of Fratton controversy in previous 12 months — this match saw his tally of bookings rise to 25 plus a sending off in his last four visits.

But for once, in the 35th minute, Pompey weren't complaining as the Hounslow official ordered a free kick to be retaken for a defender's encroachment. Kevin Dillon's first effort had been saved by Clive Baker; Kevin O'Callaghan accepted the re-take and drilled in his tenth goal of the season.

The rest of the match saw Pompey produce some of their sharpest football for weeks — and Barnsley a display of defensive steel. Baker was hustled into dropping Mick Kennedy's cross into his net but Mr. Downey disapproved of the challenge, and then late on Vince Hilaire produced a superb piece of skill to open up a chance but his shot drifted just wide — and another two points had gone.

Pompey: Knight, Tait, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Morgan, Channon (Wood 66), Hilaire.
Barnsley: Baker, Joyce, Gray, Thomas, May, Futcher, Owen, Jonsson, Walsh, Aylott, Cross. Sub, Burns.
Referee: Colin Downey (Hounslow).
Attendance: 10,426.

Now came another of life's twists — this time a happy one — for Paul Hardyman. The youngster who had suffered so many disappointments with injury and illness in his 18 months as a first choice defender, suddenly found himself back on England duty. Dave Sexton turned to Hardyman when his under 21 squad for a meeting with Denmark in Copenhagan was ravaged by injury and club calls. The match was to end in a single goal win for England.

At the same time another player disappeared through the Fratton door permanently. Paul Sugrue whose time with Pompey had been less than successful, was released and was eventually to join Fourth Division Northampton Town.

You've got to be joking ref. Noel Blake's none too happy as Colin Downey books him; now big Noel can't see the funny side of it; and now he's telling Mr Downey's fortune . . .

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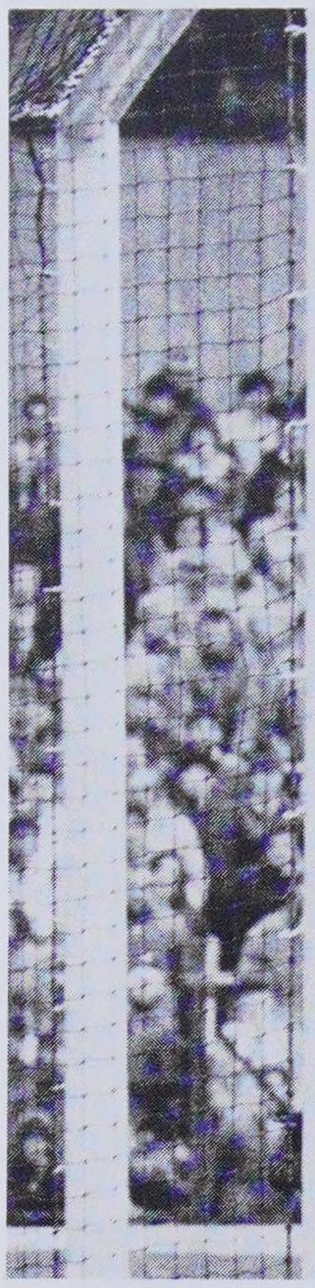
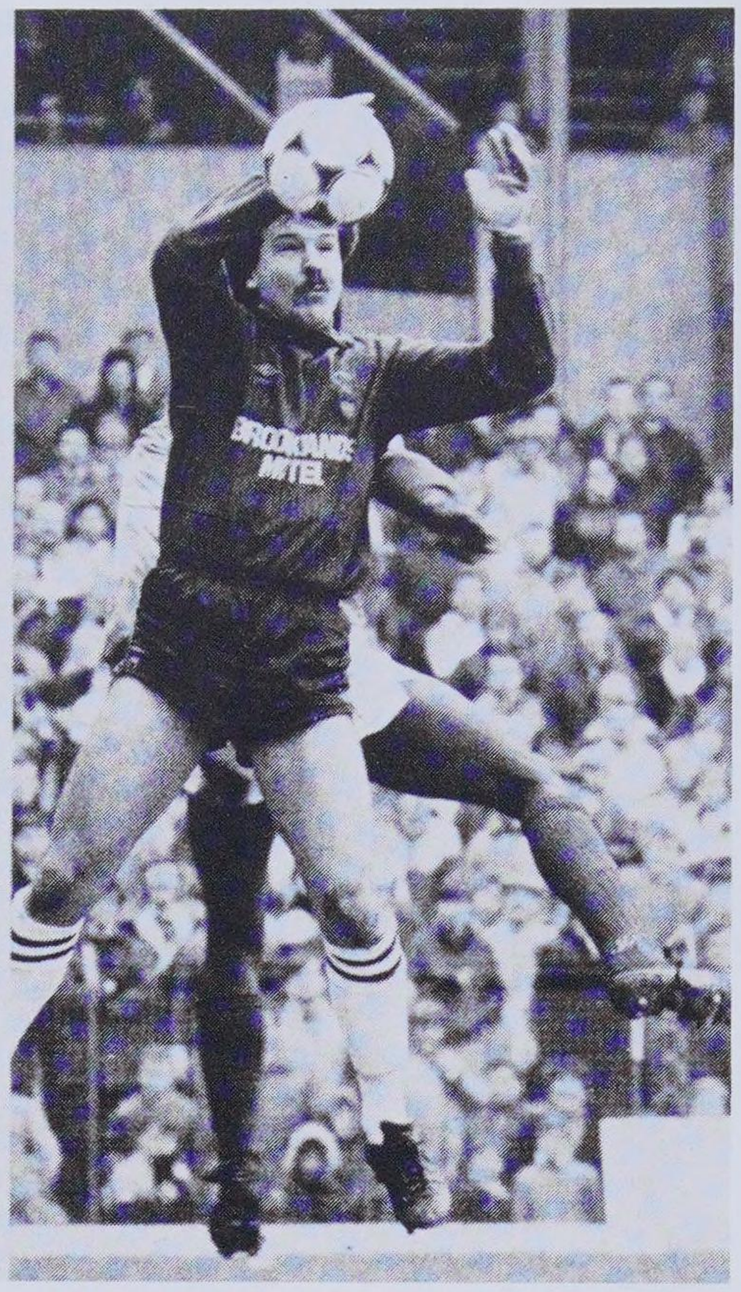
OKLANDS
MOTEL





Sorry Vinnie. It's not a goal.

Generally though there was an air of growing concern in the city as Pompey switchbacked their way through the weeks, hanging on to second place but with a mounting challenge developing from Wimbledon and Charlton Athletic.

Manager Ball, though remained defiant, raising many an eyebrow in the wake of the Barnsley draw with the assertion that Pompey would not be beaten again all season. The first test of his confidence was to be provided by Charlton who had been ominously effective since moving into Selhurst Park as Crystal Palace lodgers. It was the match which also provided Mick Quinn with his debut.

March 15

CHARLTON ATHLETIC 1, POMPEY 2

See what I mean?!!! That was Alan Ball's response after this emphatic defeat of a side hanging on to their coat-tails in the chase for promotion. Pompey's first win in four matches was an impressive demonstration of their qualities. Throughout, Charlton were very much second best and when it was over manager Lennie Lawrence was loud in his praise. "As far as I'm concerned, Wimbledon and us are now chasing third place in the table," Lawrence opined — how wrong could he be!!

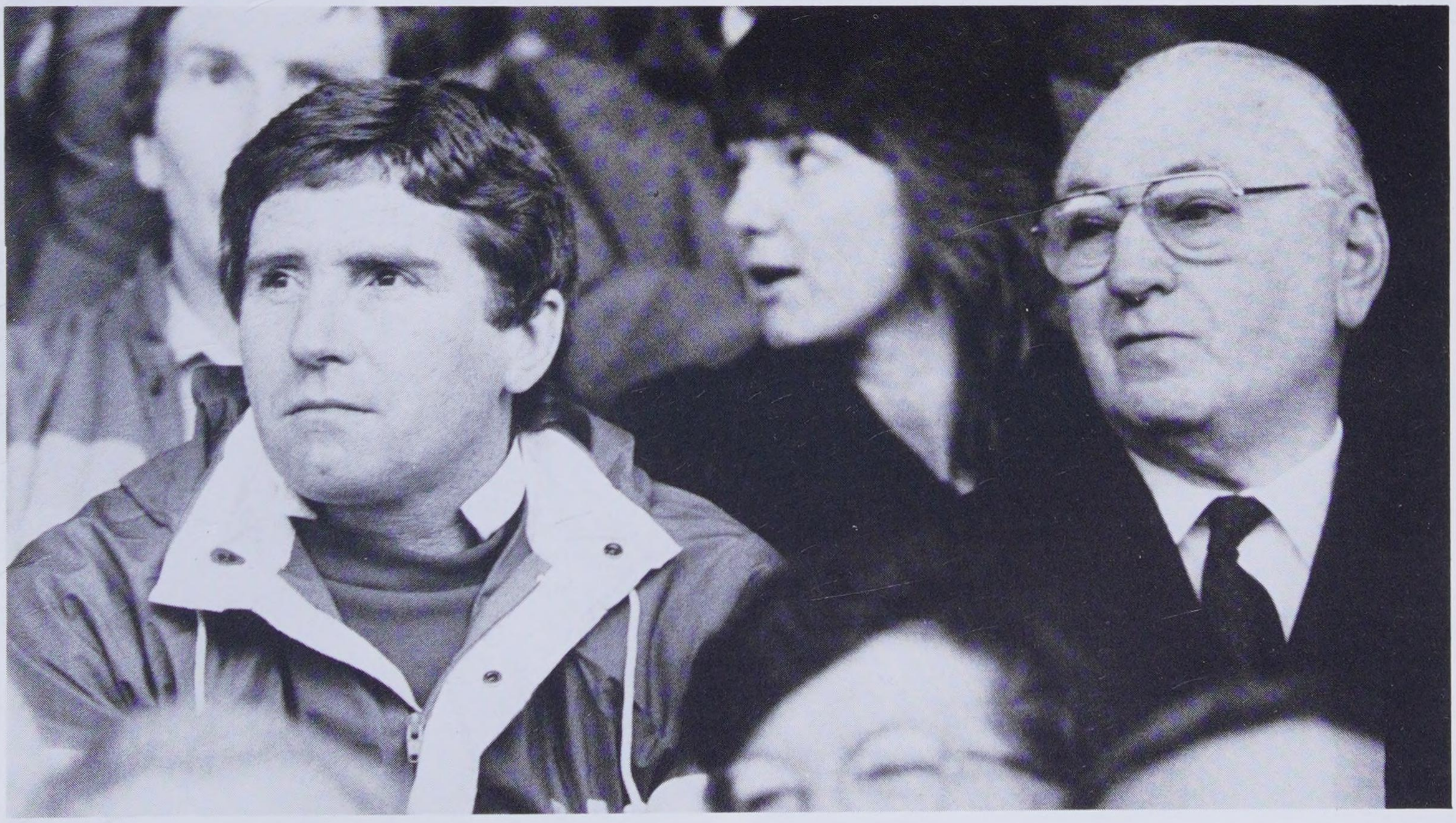
Quinn's debut could hardly have started better. Although he was to run out of steam towards the end as the effects of a recent absence with hamstring trouble caught up with him, Pompey's newboy had the satisfaction of setting up their first goal. He held up and then laid off Alan Knight's long clearance, Mick Channon looked anything but a veteran as he nipped through the defence to steer his shot past the advancing goalkeeper. All that after only nine minutes.

Yet it took only ten minutes for Charlton to level and then a moment's confusion between Knight and Noel Blake — a rarity this season — allowed big John Pearson to nip in and nod home a long cross. Charlton's satisfaction lasted only seven minutes and then Kevin O'Callaghan struck another of his breathtaking goals. Mick Kennedy's long throw was headed back to the edge of the area by Channon and a magnificent volley flashed it home. Charlton spent the second half bombarding Pompey's penalty area in the hope of finding Pearson's head for a second time but Blake now had him in his pocket and the lead was never seriously threatened.

Charlton Athletic: Johns, Humphrey, Reid, Curbishley (Stuart), Thompson, Pender, Shipley, Lee, Pearson, Aizlewood, Flanagan.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon (Wood 69), Hilaire.
Referee: Martin Bodenham (Brighton).
Attendance: 10,132.

But once again Pompey were to be denied the chance to build on the promising foundations laid at Selhurst Park. For the following Friday they were left match-less when Stoke City, ravaged by injury and illness, risked severe penalties by informing the Football League they were unable to fulfill their fixture. Instead Pompey had to wait for a further three days for the visit of Millwall to Fratton.

Banished Ballie. Neither he or chairman John Deacon seem to be too impressed.



Mick Quinn's first touch as a Pompey player - and its effect. Mick Channon scores, the old arm whirls and Vince gets in to celebrate.

Channon's the name; ten's the number.

Two falls or one submission?
John Pender isn't enjoying it.

March 25
POMPEY 2, MILLWALL 1

Three valuable points — but a match which did little for the reputation of either side or of the game in general. There was plenty of attractive football for the smallest League crowd in two seasons but that was overshadowed by the brutality of much of the tackling.

The low point came midway through the first half with an enormous brawl involving most of the 20 outfield players after Mick Tait had flattened Les Briley — a tolerant referee allowed Pompey's midfield man to escape with a booking. Shortly after that incident Millwall stunned the crowd by taking the lead with a sensational goal by Steve Lovell who controlled a ball just outside the penalty area, turned and dipped his shot beyond Alan Knight's dive.

But in the 38th minute Kevin O'Callaghan underlined his mounting reputation as a Platini-type free kick specialist when Mick Quinn, looking far sharper than on his debut ten days previously, was brought down just outside the penalty area. Billy Gilbert and Vince Hilaire insinuated themselves in Millwall's defensive wall, but peeled away as O'Callaghan, once of Millwall, approached and he blasted through the gap they had created and into the roof of the net.

But the half was to end in uproar over the incident which saw Quinn score his 100th goal in 200 appearances. Millwall keeper Paul Sansome seemed to win the race for a loose ball but Quinn lunged in to whip it away from him and into the net. Millwall protested furiously, but Mr. Napthine was unmoved. The incident had further soured the already sour atmosphere and the second half was a bitter, attritional battle with tempers and tackles high.

Pompey generally had the edge but although Hilaire, Quinn and Mick Channon all went close, the points' destination was decided by Quinn's old fashioned first half poaching act. The final seamy act involved the often controversial John Fashanu who escaped censure for a short-arm smash which flattened O'Callaghan — an incident which was to have repercussions four days later when the big centre-forward made a surprise return to Fratton as a member of the Wimbledon squad.

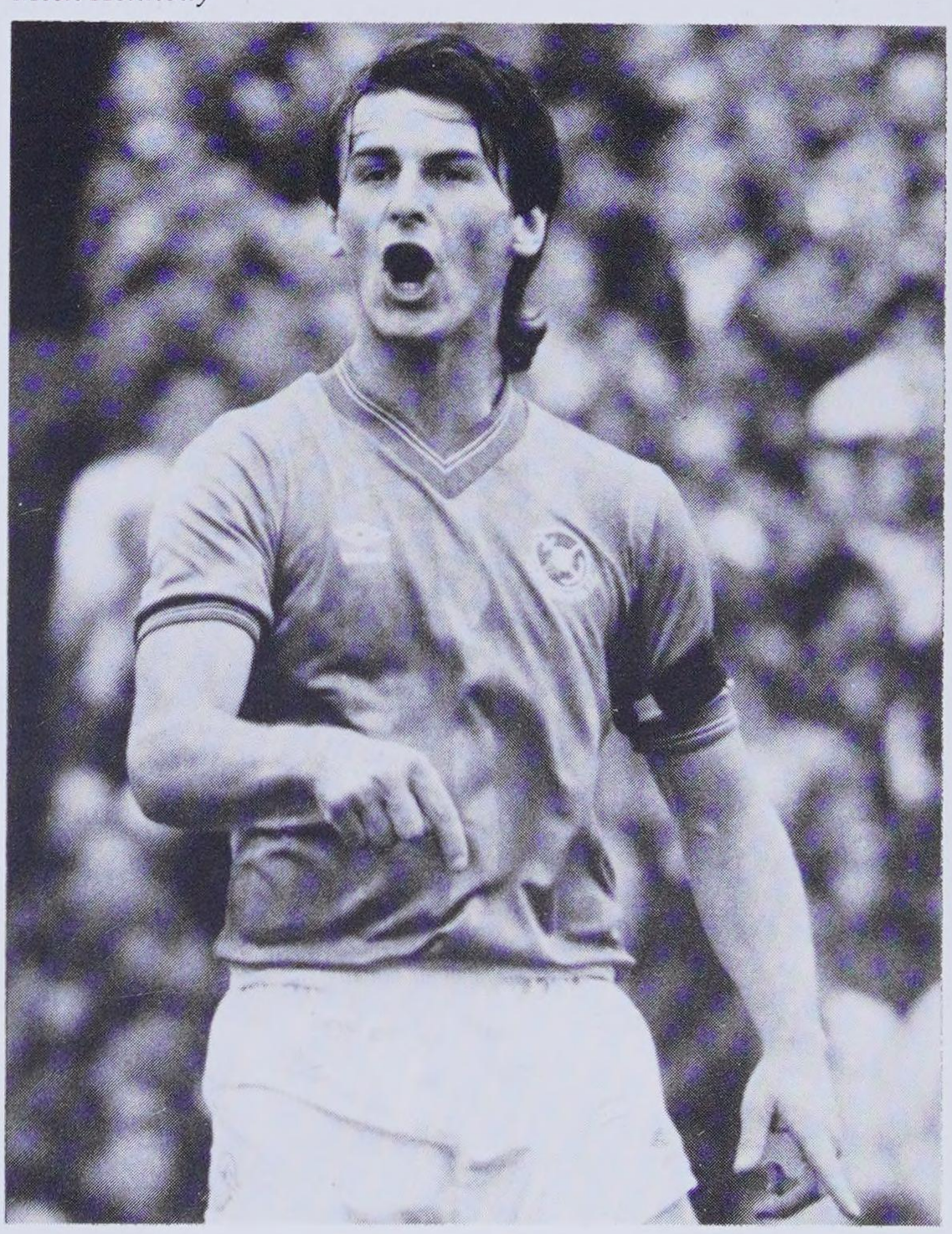
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Tait, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon, Hilaire. Sub, Dillon.
Millwall: Sansome, Stevens, Hinshelwood, Briley, Walker, McLeary, Chatterton (Sherringham), Smith, Fashanu, Lovell, Otulakowski.
Referee: Gilbert Napthine (Loughborough).
Attendance: 9,570.

The audience included Scott McGarvey who promptly left to travel north — initially he was heading for Sunderland who wished to borrow him. But Carlisle, who had already extended his loan period, objected and McGarvey ended up back at Brunton Park. Forty-eight hours after Millwall had been beaten, transfer dealing for the season came to a close. And deadline day passed Pompey by — the cruelty of the timing was another forty eight hours away.

The only departure from Fratton was Paul Wimbleton who joined Gola League Barnet on loan for the remainder of the season although Gillingham made a late move to sign goalkeeper Jake Findlay but their inquiry came too late for the paperwork to be completed. Pompey's lack of activity mirrored soccer as a whole — but there was one exception. Wimbledon, still the surprise contenders for a place in the First Division, found £125,000 to add Fashanu's power and muscle to their already muscular style. Pompey — and Kevin Dillon in particular — were to regret that. For as luck would have it, Fashanu's first engagement in his new club's colours was at Fratton. The match saw the latest phase in the security tighten up at the Park with the police-controlled closed circuit video cameras given their baptism. The work was funded by the Football Trust and a cheque for £25,000 was presented before the kick off.

Wimbledon's visit marked the start of an Easter programme which went well — yet was possibly to prove the killer to Pompey's dreams. For the Wimbledon match cost them the services of both Mick Tait and Kevin Dillon — with Gary Stanley also injured and the deadline gone, Ball's midfield cover resources were non-existent.

Mick Kennedy



Mick Quinn homes in, Paul Sansome goes flying - minus ball - and is horrified as Quinn and Mick Kennedy begin celebrating his first Pompey goal.

continued on next page

I'd like a word with you son. Referee Gilbert Napthine beckons to the departing Mick Tait (far right) as the aftermath of his tackle on the flattened Les Briley swirls on.

March 29
POMPEY 1, WIMBLEDON 1

Kevin O'Callaghan's free kick touch deserted him at the moment it was most needed — and it cost Pompey two points. O'Callaghan stepped up midway throught the first half to take a penalty after Vince Hilaire had been cut down by Lawrie Sanchez.

It was a moment of some confusion; by that time Mick Tait was no more than a passenger as the Achilles tendon injury he had long ignored, finally flared. Regular penalty taker Kevin Dillon desperately tried to get on to replace him and take the kick but was waved away and it fell to O'Callaghan to have his kick saved by Dave Beasant.

So the first half was goal-less and largely sterile but shortly after the interval Noel Blake brought it booming into life by smashing home O'Callaghan's corner. Dillon had replaced Tait at the break but soon after Blake's goal, his effectiveness was cruelly reduced. Wimbledon drafted Fashanu into the action on the hour and he had no sooner entered than his elbow had re-arranged Dillon's face, smashing his cheekbone. He had also been on only a matter of minutes when Wimbledon were on terms; a deep cross by Kevin Gage was nodded against the bar by Stuart Evans for centre-half Mick Smith to put away the rebound.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Tait (Dillon 45), Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon, Hilaire.
Wimbledon: Beasant, Gage, Winterburn, Galliers, Morris, Smith, Evans, Cork, Fishenden (Fashanu), Sanchez, Fairweather.
Referee: Ron Groves (Weston Super Mare).
Attendance: 18,859.

The loss of Mick Tait and Kevin Dillon meant that Alan Ball had to turn to his young name sake Kevin in midfield for the Easter Monday derby at Brighton's Goldstone. He was also without Mick Channon and Nicky Morgan was given another chance to advance his 16-goal tally.

Decked - but not for long. Big Noel's scored and he's going to enjoy the feeling.

BRBADOS

Not Kevin Dillon's best side at this particular moment.

"Big Blakie and little Vinnie"

All tangled up; Mick Quinn and Dave Beasant - but Beasant keeps possession.

eads

Watch the ballie... Mick Quinn demonstrates the art.

March 31
BRIGHTON 2, POMPEY 3

Pompey had gifted Brighton victory at Christmas — now the charity was repaid. Pompey produced an effective, battling performance — yet were assisted by an awful defensive performance by the home side.

The match hinged on an all-important first goal and that came Pompey's way in the 13th minute. Brighton were unhappy about Mick Kennedy's dispossession of Danny Wilson but referee Eddie Scales, to hand over control at half time because of sciatica, saw nothing wrong, and Kennedy was allowed to unleash Vince Hilaire. He was opposed by a solitary defender and had three men in support. Eventually he slipped a pass to Mick Quinn and the centre-forward cheerfully tucked away the 101st goal of his career.

Brighton spent much of the remainder of the half storming down the slope without ever looking like cracking an impressive defence and then in the last three minutes were punished for two mistakes. A quickly taken throw in caught their defence out of position, Quinn's pass was helped across goal by Morgan and Hilaire nipped in front of a hesitant defender to whip it home. Two minutes later and Pompey had a penalty as Eric Young crudely ended Hilaire's run and Quinn battered the ball past Perry Digweed.

Nine minutes into the second half and stand-in linesman Howard Matthews of Eastergate saw nothing wrong in a break by Alan Biley and Dean Saunders, both of whom looked offside, and Saunders' 17th goal of the season stood. But Pompey were in no mood to allow their win bonus to slip and there were only three minutes left when Kieran O'Regan volleyed home a sensational, but in the end irrelevant, second Brighton goal.

Brighton: Digweed, Hutchings, Gatting, Wilson (O'Regan), Young, O'Reilly, Saunders, Penney, Biley, Connor, Mortimer.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Ball, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, (Wood 80), Kennedy, Quinn, Morgan, Hilaire.
Referee: Eddie Scales (Ware); second half, Paul Alcock (Redhill).
Attendance: 16,640.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

	Home Goals						Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	35	14	2	1	43	14	8	5	5	31	20	73
POMPEY	35	11	4	3	34	13	9	2	6	25	19	66
Charlton	33	11	3	2	33	12	6	5	6	26	25	59
Wimbledon	33	10	5	2	30	14	6	4	6	14	17	57
Sheffield U	35	8	6	4	31	22	7	2	8	25	30	53
Brighton	34	9	4	4	36	23	6	3	8	22	26	52
Hull	35	9	5	3	35	18	5	5	8	23	32	52
Crystal Palace	34	9	2	6	21	19	6	5	6	21	21	52
Oldham	35	10	3	4	34	25	4	4	10	21	28	49
Stoke	35	6	10	2	25	16	6	3	8	18	28	49

After the week-end, Pompey took stock; Mick Tait was certain not to play again until the new season with his leg in a full length plaster, Kevin Dillon needed an operation to put his cheekbone together and Gary Stanley's back injury was showing no sign of improvement. And they also began thinking further ahead, making the first moves to ensure that goalkeeper Alan Knight took his service into a decade by offering him a new three year contract.

But with a five-match unbeaten run behind them, Pompey were looking confidently towards the run-in to the season — and even their most pessimistic fan could see reason for hope. Then came the let-down — doubly deflating because of the man who punctured their hopes.

One-nil. Mick Quinn rides a challenge to score against Brighton. *Picture Malcolm McCluskey*

The ball's in Brighton's net again - and Mick Quinn walks thin celebratory ice. *Picture Malcolm McCluskey*

POMPEY

11. April 1986

April 5
POMPEY 2, LEEDS UNITED 3

Andy Ritchie returned to Fratton Park to make Pompey regret their decision to send him on his way back to Leeds four weeks earlier. The striker who would have been in Pompey's blue but for his knee problem took personal revenge by scoring twice.

It was a cruel time for Pompey to produce their least convincing performance of the season and the doubts came crowding back in again. Yet in the first half, although short of their best, Pompey still looked more than good enough to take care of Leeds.

They cruised ahead in the 11th minute with Noel Blake scoring a close range header from Kevin O'Callaghan's cross. The lead survived until ten minutes after the break and then Ritchie levelled with a goal that had more than its share of good fortune about it. Neil Aspin sent him away down the right and, spotting Alan Knight off his line, he chipped an improbable shot over the keeper and just inside the far post.

Seven minutes later and Ian Snodin burst through a square defence to set up former Saint Ian Baird for a tap-in goal and seven minutes from time, with Pompey wilting and bedraggled, Ritchie worked himself an opening and saw Paul Hardyman's deflection carry a half-hit shot past a wrong-footed Knight. Blake made it 3-2 from close range in the 88th minute but there was to be no escape for Pompey.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Ball, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon (Morgan 62), Hilaire.

Leeds United: Day, Aspin, Robinson, Snodin, Ormsby, Rennie, McCluskey, Sheridan, Baird, Swan, Ritchie. Sub, Stiles.

Referee: John Ball (Kirby Muxloe).

Attendance: 14,430.

The defeat was bad enough — but the match also left Pompey with another worry. Mick Kennedy collected his ninth booking of the season and another suspension seemed inevitable; but there was relief — a change in regulations spared him that and instead he escaped with a warning about his future conduct. But Alan Ball was still worried about his lack of midfield cover and so Scott McGarvey was recalled from his loan period helping Carlisle in their battle against relegation.

April 8
CRYSTAL PALACE 2, POMPEY 1

Alan Ball was convinced fate had frowned on his side with Andy Ritchie's first goal on Saturday — he was feeling even more ill-used as Crystal Palace deprived his side of their 100 per cent London record. For the goal which beat them and screwed the pressure down a little tighter, was an utter freak. It came seconds from the interval from a young man with a famous goalscoring name. Andy Gray, a 22-year-old West Indian discovered in local non-league football, had already given Palace the lead in the 18th minute with a close range header after a corner had been flicked on.

Until then Pompey, who had Lee Sandford deputizing for the injured Paul Hardyman, had looked the better side on a difficult, boggy pitch, but had been unable to underline their edge with a goal. Then with the interval beckoning, young Gray drifted a hit-and-hope shot from the touchline and everyone stood transfixed as it curled over Alan Knight and into the net off the inside of the far post.

As Steve Coppell later said: 'It was one of those shots where you start to say 'you stupid. . . what a brilliant goal'. Ball re-organized things for the second half, Kevin Ball dropped into the middle of the defence, his more natural position, and Billy Gilbert pushed forward into midfield. The former Palace player quickly saw George Wood unknowingly block a header, then Vince Hilaire was clear but betrayed by the mud through the middle which clawed the ball away from him.

But in the 67th minute young Gray breathed fresh hope into Pompey as his diving header deflected Mick Kennedy's shot into the corner of his net — a curious hat trick. Pompey sensed a reprieve but the equalizer would not come; twice the ball stuck in the mud on the goal-line and eventually

Somewhere there's a ball. Noel Blake and Billy Gilbert think they know where it is.

time ran out on them — and suddenly they were vulnerable to the challenge of London's Wimbledon and Charlton.

Crystal Palace: Wood, Finnigan, Brush, Taylor, Nebbeling, Cannon, Irvine, Ketteridge, Gray, Higginbottom, Wright. Sub, Lindsay.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Sandford, Ball, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan (Wood 53), Kennedy, Quinn, Channon, Hilaire.
Referee: Vic Callow (Solihull).
Attendance: 11,731.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	36	15	2	1	46	14	8	5	5	31	20	76
POMPEY	37	11	4	4	36	16	9	2	7	26	21	66
Wimbledon	35	10	6	2	31	15	7	4	6	17	19	61
Charlton	34	11	3	2	33	12	6	5	7	27	27	59
Crystal Palace	37	11	2	6	25	21	6	6	6	22	22	59
Hull	37	9	6	3	35	18	6	5	8	24	32	56
Sheffield U	37	8	6	4	31	22	7	3	9	26	32	54
Brighton	36	9	5	4	37	24	6	3	9	22	29	53

Pompey's spirits, for all Alan Ball's defiance, now needed a boost — and it came from Jack Charlton. The Republic of Ireland's new manager named both Kevin O'Callaghan and Mick Kennedy in his squad for their prestige friendly against Uruguay. But no sooner had they been named than Pompey withdrew them, denying Kennedy his full international debut, because the match clashed with their re-arranged trip to Stoke.

A long haul to Middlesbrough stretched ahead of them and Ball's playing resources were stretched to the limit. He decided against risking young Sandford in what promised to be a gruelling battle against a side fearing relegation, deciding instead to use Kevin Ball at full back and give the recalled McGarvey an outing in midfield. He also rested Mick Channon and restored Nicky Morgan to the attack.

Hey ref. Keep an eye on the time. Mick Kennedy makes a point and reinforces it.

Sometimes you can't help laughin. Vince Hilaire, all frustration, and George Wood, all relief.

April 12
MIDDLESBROUGH 1, POMPEY 0

Pompey's cause needed 90 minutes of utter commitment from the entire side — but it was not forthcoming. An insipid performance left them looking anything but a promotion side. They created scarcely a chance — and blew the best of the few there were.

That came from a controversial first half penalty for a foul on Vince Hilaire which Mick Quinn elevated high over Middlesbrough's bar. Then midway through the second half Pompey's cup overflowed when Kevin Ball was sent off for a challenge on Tony Mowbray; it seemed harsh but the youngster had been lucky to escape with no more than a booking for a first half incident involving Bernie Slaven.

Ball's dismissal came immediately after Middlesbrough had poached the lead with a shot by Don O'Riordan which deflected to leave Mowbray with an unchallenged chance to tuck his shot just inside the post. Desperation now fired Pompey, they pushed forward recklessly and David Currie, exploiting the gaps they left, scorned the chance of a hat trick. Pompey's disillusion was completed by the news that both Wimbledon and Charlton had closed up on them with a comfortable 3-0 home victories.

Middlesbrough: Pears, Laws, McAndrew, Mowbray, O'Riordan, Pallister, Ripley, Cooper, Steven, Currie, Hamilton. Sub, Stephens.
Pompey: Knight, Ball, Swain, McGarvey, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Morgan (Wood 61), Hilaire.
Referee: Keith Hackett (Sheffield).
Attendance: 7,160.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

	Home Goals						Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	38	15	3	1	46	14	9	5	5	33	20	80
POMPEY	38	11	4	4	36	16	9	2	8	26	22	66
Wimbledon	36	11	6	2	34	15	7	4	6	17	19	64
Charlton	35	12	3	2	36	12	6	5	7	27	27	62
Crystal Palace	38	11	2	6	25	21	6	6	7	22	25	59
Hull	38	9	6	3	35	18	6	6	8	25	33	57
Sheffield U	38	9	6	4	33	22	7	3	9	26	32	57
Brighton	37	9	5	5	37	26	6	3	9	22	29	53
Barnsley	38	9	6	5	27	22	4	7	7	14	21	52
Oldham	38	10	4	4	35	26	4	5	11	22	31	51
Stoke	37	6	11	2	25	16	6	3	9	18	30	50

Consolations were hard to find around Fratton Park. Although Alan Ball maintained his 'we'll be alright' line, the pressure was on. Chairman John Deacon reacted by packing the first team squad off to Jersey in an attempt to lighten their load as Charlton and Wimbledon closed in for the kill.

But there was a shaft of medical cheer; Kevin Dillon's optimism that he would be around for the finish was supported by the specialist who had repaired his facial damage, giving the midfield man the all clear for the two final matches.

And as Pompey got away from it all, Millwall did them a favour by holding Charlton to a draw — in fact at one stage leading 3-0 — which left Charlton three points behind with two matches in hand. But then came a blow for their supporters' morale — the announcement that most of the Fratton End was suffering from aging structural damage and would have to be closed for the last two matches.

Pompey returned from Jersey to face Grimsby lifted by the return of Paul Hardyman — and by Kevin Dillon's determination to play although the specialist wanted him to wait at least another week. That meant a return to the substitute's bench for Scott McGarvey.

April 19
POMPEY 3, GRIMSBY 1

Pompey roared out their challenge to the chasing London pair as they rode a moment of crisis to record their 12th home win of the season. That crisis came within seconds of Mick Quinn cracking Grimsby's defensive stronghold in the 57th minute. The crowd's buzz at his strike had scarcely died away when a defensive error allowed the visitors an equalizer. For a while Pompey rocked, then Vince Hilaire calmed their nerves — and finally Scott McGarvey wrapped up the points with a superb far post header.

The match was a triumph for Pompey's midfield where Mick Kennedy was the scrapping destroyer of old and Kevin Dillon the perfect foil as he justified his personal gamble in defying doctor's orders to play. Yet despite 45 minutes of their most fluent football for weeks, Pompey reached the interval empty-handed with the crowd's worry heightened by a Quinn shot which hit a post and another which drifted just too high.

Then in the 57th minute Quinn finally broke through as he steered Hilaire's shot just inside the post. Almost immediately though Grimsby were level; Paul Hardyman failed to control a bouncing ball, it was whipped away from him and Gordon Hobson nodded home the cross. But in the 76th minute Pompey were back in front; Kennedy charged down a clearance and found Hilaire whose shot went in off Nigel Batch's groping fingers.

Seven minutes from time McGarvey, on for Mick Channon, wrapped up the points with a superb flicked header from Kevin O'Callaghan's cross — a sweet moment for the young Scot who had been so cruelly treated by some among the fans. The value of the win was underlined when the other results came through — both Charlton and Wimbledon had drawn away from home — the gap was now four over the Dons and five on Charlton.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon (McGarvey 70), Hilaire.
Grimsby: Batch, Andy Moore, Crombie, Peake, Lyons, Kevin Moore, Henshaw, Lund (Agnew 81), Hobson, Robinson, Cumming.
Referee: John Moules (Ingatestone).
Attendance: 12.967.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	39	15	4	1	47	15	9	5	5	33	20	81
POMPEY	39	12	4	4	39	17	9	2	8	26	22	69
Wimbledon	37	11	6	2	34	15	7	5	6	18	20	65
Charlton	37	12	4	2	39	15	6	6	7	28	28	64
Crystal Palace	39	12	2	6	28	21	6	6	7	22	25	62
Hull	39	9	7	3	36	19	6	6	8	25	33	58
Sheffield U	39	9	6	4	33	22	7	3	10	27	38	57
Oldham	39	11	4	4	36	26	4	5	11	22	31	54
Brighton	39	9	5	6	39	29	6	3	10	22	30	53
Millwall	38	11	2	6	34	20	4	5	10	23	38	52
Barnsley	39	9	6	5	27	22	4	7	8	14	21	52

The confidence that win had generated was to last only three days — then it was gone, utterly gone, after an uninspired display and defeat at Stoke.

April 22
STOKE CITY 2, POMPEY 0

Stoke had thirsted for revenge ever since Pompey had beaten them twice at Fratton early in the season — they took it emphatically. But they took it with a little bit of help from a side unable to rise to the heights of character and application which had defeated Grimsby's dour resistance at the week-end.

It was a performance which left manager Ball near speechless. 'A Second Division performance' was his only post-match offering as he and his players headed for the bus home, knowing that only a miracle could bring them the prize which had for so long seemed theirs. That doomed feeling was the result of London action where Charlton had crushed Third Division-headed Fulham to move into third place and trim Pompey's lead to two points and take a 27-24 goal-difference advantage. Pompey had put the skids under their dream in the 17th minute when a awful display of marking from Stoke's first corner allowed George Berry to bury an unchallenged header.

Pompey were to challenge that lead only once; a foul on Vince Hilaire looked in the penalty area, was given outside, and for once Kevin O'Callaghan failed to hit the target with his free kick.

The last minutes of the half were all agony; Keith Bertschin, who a year earlier had so nearly joined Pompey, hit a post and then in the last seconds, Bertschin got Ian Painter away down the right and his cross skidded into the net off Phil Heath. The second half was a time of frantic, desperate pressure — but pressure which never looked like redeeming the errors of the first 45 minutes.

Stoke City: Fox, Mills, Hemming, Bonnyman, Bould, Berry, Painter, Saunders, Bertschin, Shaw, Heath. Sub, Adams.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon (McGarvey 55), Hilaire.
Referee: Joe Worrall (Warrington).
Attendance: 8,529.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	39	15	4	1	47	15	9	5	5	33	20	81
POMPEY	40	12	4	4	39	17	9	2	9	26	24	69
Charlton	38	12	4	2	39	15	7	6	7	31	28	67
Wimbledon	37	11	6	2	34	15	7	5	6	18	20	65
Crystal Palace	40	12	2	6	28	21	6	6	8	24	28	62
Sheffield U	40	10	6	4	36	24	7	3	10	27	38	60
Hull	39	9	7	3	36	19	6	6	8	25	33	58
Millwall	39	12	2	6	37	22	4	5	10	23	38	55
Oldham	39	11	4	4	36	26	4	5	11	22	31	54
Stoke	39	7	11	2	27	16	6	4	9	19	31	54

So Pompey had two matches left; two matches which had to be won — and even then required 'co-operation' from Selhurst Park and Plough Lane. The first was at Bramall Lane, a ground where Pompey had traditionally achieved little since winning back in 1955. Again it was to provide little joy.

In fact by the time they trailed limply away from Yorkshire, they had slipped out of the top two for the first time all season.

When you're close together, dancing back to back....

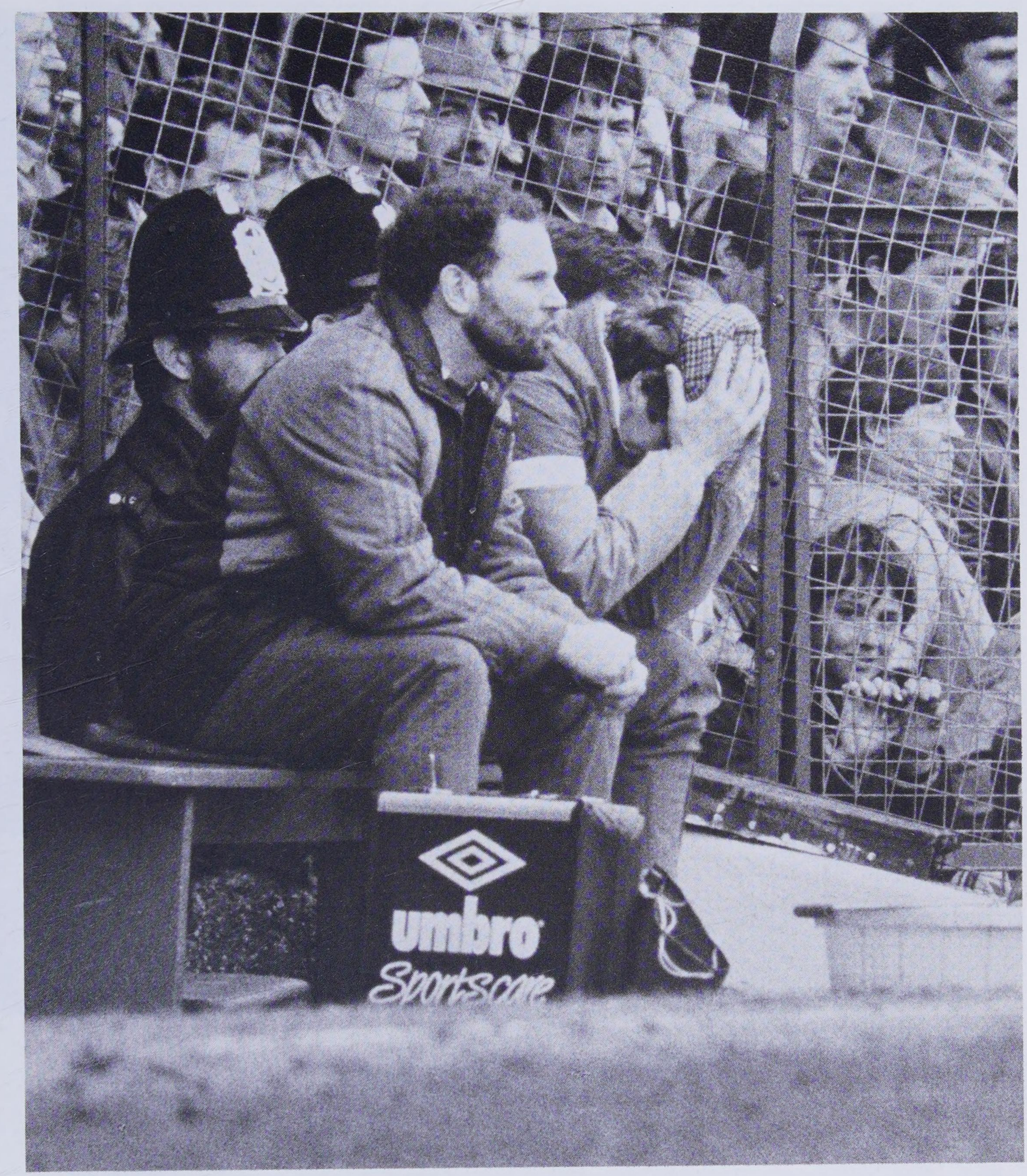
Vince snaps another to Mick Lyons horror and Mick Quinn's obvious delight.

The things people do at this game.....

Another for Mick Quinn - and another celebration run.

continued on next page

Surely not.... Oh my God, it's happened. Alan Ball lets his emotions show.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Scott McGarvey's classic header.

Marking at it's worst. George Berry gets the goal that destroyed Pompey at Stoke

continued on next page

April 26
SHEFFIELD UNITED 0, POMPEY 0

A performance which suggested that, for all the brave words, Pompey had lost their self-belief. Sheffield were the side who had inflicted the most comprehensive beating of the season on Pompey at Fratton Park; but this was a very different Sheffield. That defeat had been inflicted by men of massive experience — by Withe, Thompson, McNaught and Lewington. Here they were all missing — but a hastily cobbled-together team was given an easy ride by men in Royal Blue who lacked passion and conviction.

There was pressure enough from Pompey but veteran goalkeeper John Burridge needed to make only one demanding save in the entire match. And when it was over Pompey could look back on only a single decent chance — and that evaporated as Vince Hilaire, slowed by a groin injury, dwelt on the ball and was robbed. At the other end though it was different; Keith Edwards was three times denied by Alan Knight while both Kevin O'Callaghan and Noel Blake averted disaster by clearing efforts off their line with their goalkeeper beaten.

And as it finished Pompey knew there had been no Capital co-operation with Charlton beating Blackburn to nose into second place and Wimbledon keeping their surge going with a win over Hull. Charlton were in second place on goal-difference, Wimbledon two points adrift with three matches in hand.

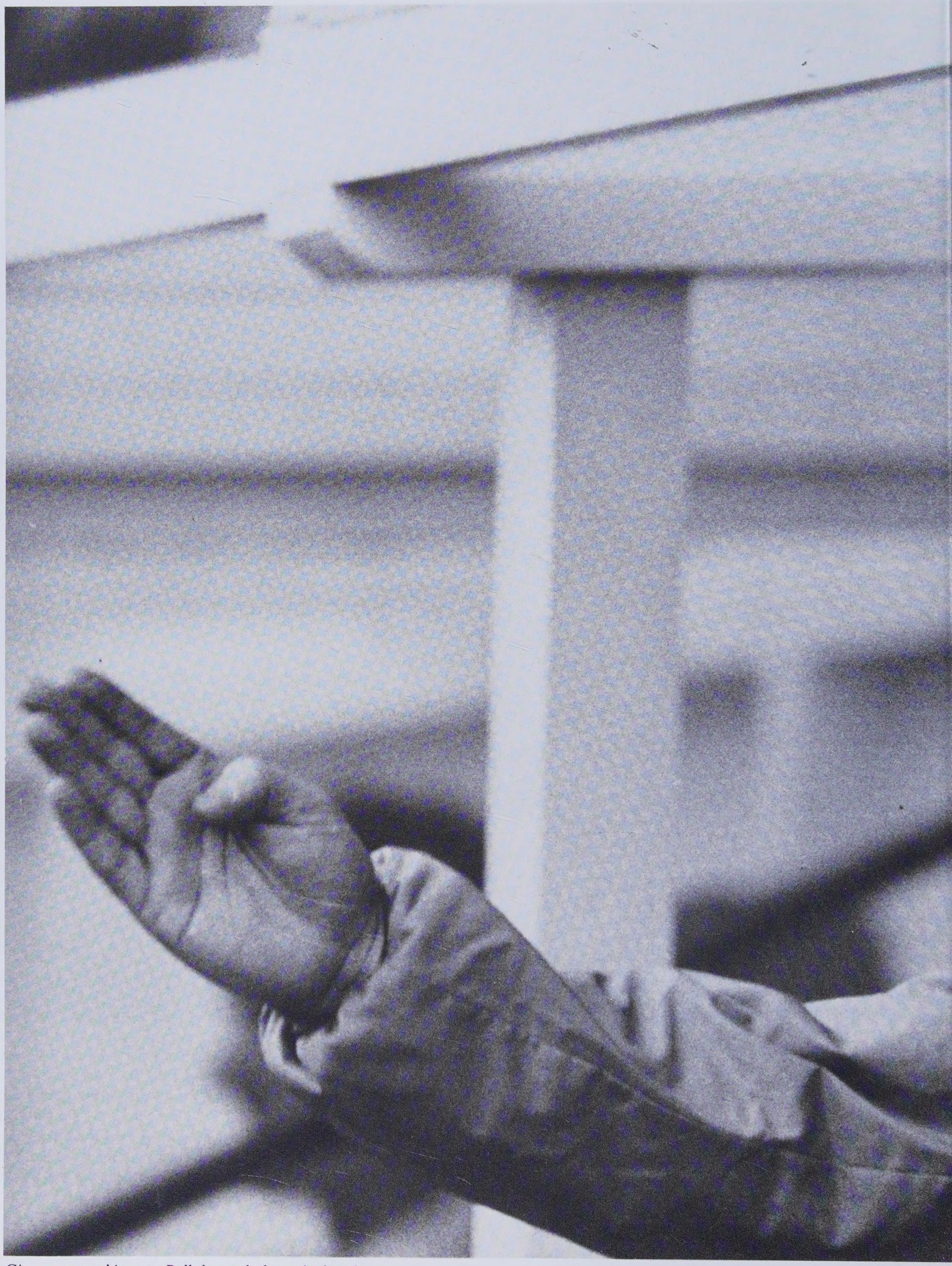
"The match had to be won, was there to be won, but we didn't look as though we wanted to win it," was Alan Ball's crestfallen summary.

Sheffield United: Burridge, Paul Smith, Bolton, Arnott, Stancliffe, Eckhardt, Morris, Edwards, Philliskirk, Walshaw, Frain. Sub, Brian Smith.
Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, O'Callaghan, Kennedy, Quinn, Channon, Hilaire (Wood 52).
Referee: T.A. Jones (Macclesfield).
Attendance: 12,234.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	40	15	4	1	47	15	9	5	6	33	21	81
Charlton	39	13	4	2	42	15	7	6	7	31	28	70
POMPEY	41	12	4	4	39	17	9	3	9	26	24	70
Wimbledon	38	12	6	2	37	16	7	5	6	18	20	68
Crystal Palace	41	12	2	6	28	21	7	6	8	28	30	65
Sheffield U	41	10	7	4	36	24	7	3	10	27	38	61
Hull	40	9	7	3	36	19	6	6	9	26	36	58
Stoke	40	8	11	2	29	16	6	4	9	19	31	57
Brighton	40	10	5	6	42	30	6	3	10	22	30	56
Millwall	40	12	2	6	37	22	4	5	11	23	41	55
Barnsley	41	9	6	6	29	26	5	7	8	16	22	55

Blakie to the rescue.



Give me everything..... Ball demands from the bench.

A determined Mick Kennedy

The end of a dream. Referee Jones blows the whistle on Pompey's promotion chances - and Kevin O'Callaghan knows it.

Pompey now had just one match left — at home to Bradford City — but before it arrived their ninth months in the promotion places was over. The days between Sheffield and Bradford held matches for both their rivals; Charlton duly completed a double over their doomed neighbours Fulham to make promotion a virtual certainty and Wimbledon scrambled a single goal win over Stoke City to ease into third spot, a point ahead of Ball's side. It was hard even to hope for a miracle.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

	Home Goals						Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	41	15	4	1	47	15	9	5	7	33	22	81
Charlton	40	14	4	2	44	15	7	6	7	31	28	73
Wimbledon	39	13	6	2	38	16	7	5	6	18	20	71
POMPEY	41	12	4	4	39	17	9	3	9	26	24	70
Crystal Palace	41	12	2	6	28	21	7	6	8	28	30	65
Hull	41	10	7	3	37	19	6	6	9	26	36	61
Sheffield U	41	10	7	4	36	24	7	3	10	27	38	61
Stoke	41	8	11	2	29	16	6	4	10	19	32	57
Brighton	41	10	5	6	42	30	6	3	11	22	32	56
Millwall	40	12	2	6	37	22	4	5	11	23	41	55

Fate had one more unkind trick to play — injury struck again. Alan Ball's strategy had been based on his two wingers, now for the first time he was deprived of both. Vince Hilaire was ruled out of his first match of the season and Kevin O'Callaghan who had played through varying degrees of discomfort since November's knee injury, was also missing. So too was Mick Channon. So Ball was forced to improvise. Paul Wood was invited to revert to the wide role of his youth, Scott McGarvey to work the other touchline while Nicky Morgan was reinstated to partnership with Mick Quinn. And for the first time 19-year-old Paulsgrove lad Kevin Russell found himself in the spotlight on the substitute's bench.

It's stuck ref

POMPEY

12. May 1986

May 3
POMPEY 4, BRADFORD CITY 0

An emphatic win — yet ultimately an irrelevance. It gave Pompey 69 goals for the season, the same as the previous year and their 22nd win — two better than the year before — but in it the end did not matter. For an hour though it seemed it might; for while they were leading Bradford, Huddersfield were holding Wimbledon. Could the miracle happen?

Mick Quinn, poaching as Peter Lichfield failed to hold Mick Kennedy's 20th minute shot, was the man who breathed hope into an ailing cause as countless transisters on the terraces carried the tidings of Huddersfield's refusal to submit to Wimbledon's pressure. But before Quinn picked up his second goal, courtesy of Litchfield's misjudgement, everyone knew it was too late; those 'trannies' had informed their owners of a Lawrie Sanchez goal for Wimbledon — and that two Huddersfield men had been sent off. Pompey had by now sent on Russell in place of Morgan and the youngster was to provide the afternoon with its main significance. His pace, aggression and confidence was a breath of hope for the future.

He was desperately unlucky not to finish with a goal but had the satisfaction of providing the cross from which Paul Wood scored the fourth — the third had come from Kevin Dillon and the penalty spot. But it was too late; Wimbledon eased through on that Sanchez goal to finish the afternoon a point clear of Pompey with two matches to play while Charlton had won at Carlisle.

Pompey: Knight, Swain, Hardyman, Dillon, Blake, Gilbert, Wood, Kennedy, Quinn, Morgan (Russell 64), McGarvey.
Bradford City: Litchfield, Oliver, Evans, McCall, Jackson, Clegg, Hendrie, Ormondroyd, Goodman, Abbott, Thorne (Singleton).
Referee: Brian Stevens (Stonehouse).
Attendance: 9,568.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

		Home Goals					Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	42	16	4	1	51	15	9	5	7	33	22	84
Charlton	41	14	4	2	44	15	8	6	7	34	30	76
Wimbledon	40	13	6	2	38	16	8	5	6	19	20	74
POMPEY	42	13	4	4	43	17	9	3	9	26	24	73
Crystal Palace	42	12	3	6	29	22	7	6	8	28	30	66
Hull	42	11	7	3	39	19	6	6	9	26	36	64
Sheffield U	42	10	7	4	36	24	7	4	10	28	39	62

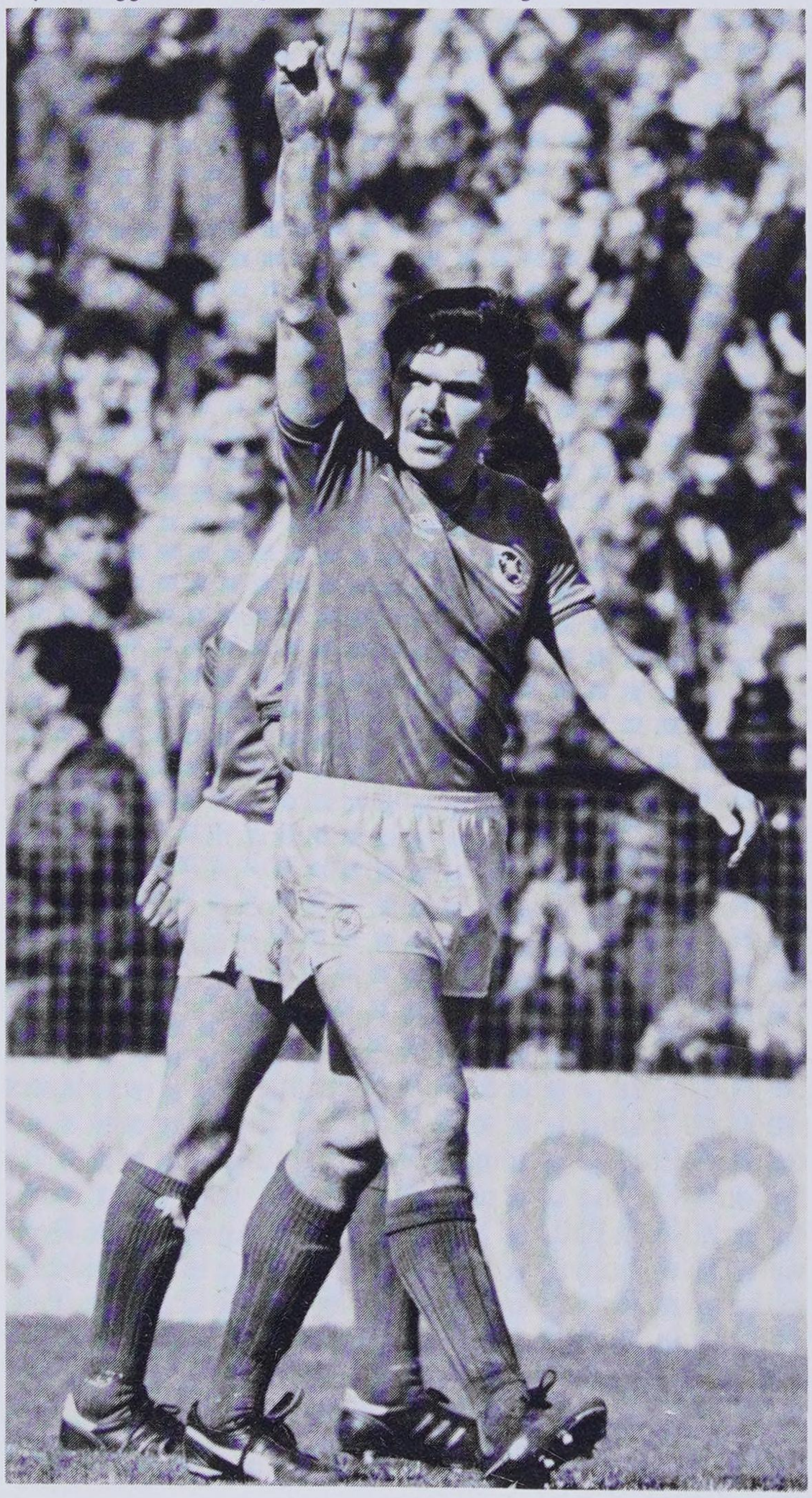
It meant that the events of the final week were of only passing significance for Pompey. As it turned out, Charlton and Wimbledon drew and then Wimbledon drew at Bradford — results which confirmed Charlton as second to runaway champions Norwich and saw Wimbledon finish three points clear of Pompey — an outcome which even a month earlier was unthinkable.

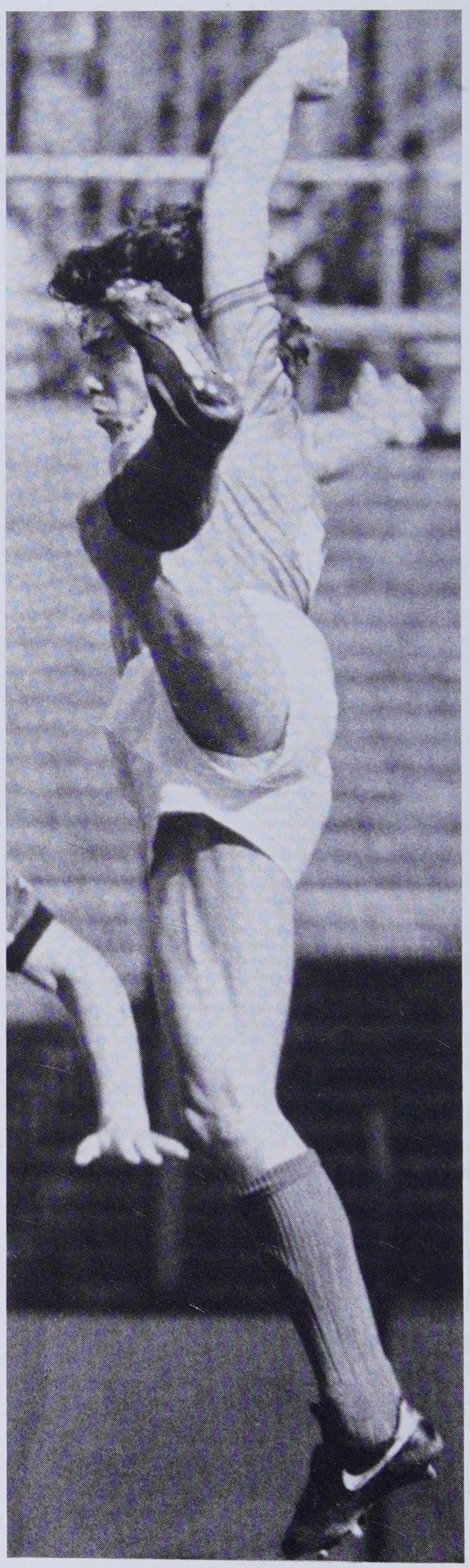
Now everyone — player and fan alike — held their breath; what would be the cost of this stunning disappointment?

Chief scout Derek Healy had already paid the price as chairman John Deacon warned that costs must be cut. Healy's contract was up and he was informed there would be no extension. All along though Mr. Deacon had maintained that manager Ball would not pay the price for his team's lack of staying power. But there were prices to be paid — the retained list spelled that out. Five players who had featured to some extent in the campaign were transfer-listed — leading scorer Nicky Morgan and Kevin Dillon were the two prime casualties, with them Andy Gosney, Kevin Ball and Scott McGarvey. Among those freed were Dave Thomas, youth team coach since Ball's evelation to the manager's chair, Gary Stanley, Mick Channon, Paul Wimbleton, Brendan O'Connell and Jake Findlay.

While that list was being issued, Kevin O'Callaghan was undergoing surgery on the cartilage damaged and ignored for so long. But the doubts still hovered around Alan Ball's head — finally they were lifted when Mr. Deacon announced that he had given his manager a year's extension to his contract to provide the base from which he could finish the job he had so narrowly failed to complete in his first two years in the Fratton hot-seat. But as he did so, Alan Knight rejected the contract he had been offered — and so for the second summer in a row the goalkeeper, who had made Pompey's jersey his own, holidayed with an uncertain future.

A four-legged Mick Quinn salutes another goal.





Paul Hardyman performs a physical impossibility

Grounded goalkeeper Peter Litchfield spills Mick Kennedy's shot, Mick Quinn poaches and he and Nicky Morgan celebrate.

continued on next page

Noel Blake - man of the year.

Top of the Table
DIVISION II

	Home Goals						Away Goals					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Norwich	42	16	4	1	51	15	9	5	7	33	22	84
Charlton	42	14	5	2	44	15	8	6	7	34	30	77
Wimbledon	42	13	6	2	38	16	8	7	6	20	21	76
POMPEY	42	13	4	4	43	17	9	3	9	26	24	73
Crystal Palace	42	12	3	6	29	22	7	6	8	28	30	66
Hull	42	11	7	3	39	19	6	6	9	26	36	64
Sheffield U	42	10	7	4	36	24	7	4	10	28	39	62
Oldham	42	13	4	4	40	28	4	5	12	22	33	60
Millwall	42	12	3	6	39	24	5	5	11	25	41	59
Stoke	42	8	11	2	29	16	6	4	11	19	34	57
Brighton	42	10	5	6	42	30	6	3	12	22	34	56
Barnsley	42	9	6	6	29	26	5	8	8	18	24	56
Bradford	42	14	1	6	36	24	2	5	14	15	39	54
Leeds	42	9	7	5	30	22	6	1	14	26	50	53
Grimsby	42	11	4	6	35	24	3	6	12	23	38	52
Huddersfield	42	10	6	5	30	23	4	4	13	21	44	52
Shrewsbury	42	11	5	5	29	20	3	4	14	23	44	51
Sunderland	42	10	5	6	33	29	3	6	12	14	32	50
Blackburn	42	10	4	7	30	20	2	9	10	23	42	49
Carlisle	42	10	2	9	30	28	3	5	13	17	43	46
Middlesbro	42	8	6	7	26	23	4	3	14	18	30	45
Fulham	42	8	3	10	29	32	2	3	16	16	37	36

dejection.....

1985-86 Statistics

Date	Venue	Opponents	Attendance	F-A HT	F-A FT	Knight	Swain	Hardyman	Dillon	Blake	Gilbert	O'Callaghan	Kennedy	Morgan	Channon	Hilaire	Tait	Doyle	Stanley	Wood	Money	Ball	Russell	Sandford	McGarvey	Christensen	Sugrue	Gosney	Quinn
Aug 17	A	Hull City	8224	1-1	2-2	1	3			5	6	7	8	9[1]	10	11[1]	2	4	12										
Aug 20	H	Sunderland	14681	0-0	3-0	1	2	3	4[1]	5	6	7	8	9[1]	10*	11[1]				12									
Aug 24	H	Carlisle	12595	3-0	4-0	1	2	3[1]	4	5	6	7	8	9[2]	10	11[1]				12									
Aug 27	A	Huddersfield	9298	1-0	2-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9[1]	10*	11				12									
Aug 31	H	Norwich	15504	1-0	2-0	1	2	3	4	5		7	8	9[2]	10*	11				12		6							
Sept 3	A	Shrewsbury	3719	1-1	1-1	1		3	4	5		7[1]	8	9	10*	11				12	2	6							
Sept 7	A	Fulham	9331	0-0	1-0	1	2	3	4	5		7[1]	8	9	10*	11	12					6							
Sept 14	H	Stoke City	13720	0-0	3-0	1	3		4[1p]	5	6	7	8	9[1]	10*	11	2			12[1]									
Sept 17	H	Charlton (FMC)	3074	0-0	4-1	1	3*		4	5[1]			8*	9[1]		11	2		14	10[2]		6	7	12					
Sept 21	A	Oldham Athletic	5814	0-0	0-2	1	3		4	5	6	7		9	10*	11	2		12			8							
Sept 24	A	Gillingham (MC)	4617	2-0	3-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7[1]		9		11	8[1]			10[1]		12							
Sept 28	A	Blackburn	16870	1-0	3-0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7[1]	8	9	10*[1]	11[1]				12									
Oct 2	A	Chelsea (FMC)	6833	0-2	0-3	1	2	3	4	5		7	8	9		11*	12			10		6							
Oct 5	A	Barnsley	7064	1-0	1-0	1	2	3*	4	5[1]	6	7	8	9	10	11	12												
Oct 8	H	Gillingham (MC)	7629	0-0	2-1	1			4	5	6	7	8	9[1]		11	2			10	12		3[1]						
Oct 12	H	Charlton Athletic	15549	1-0	1-0	1	3		4[1p]	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2			12									
Oct 19	H	Crystal Palace	16538	1-0	1-0	1	3		4	5	6	7	8	9[1]	10*	11	2			12									
Oct 26	A	Millwall	6810	2-0	4-0	1	3*		4	5	6	7[2]		9[2]	10	11	8		2				12						
Oct 29	H	Stoke City (MC)	13319	0-0	2-0	1			4[2p]	5	6	7		9	10*	11	8		2				3	12					
Nov 2	A	Leeds Utd	15672	1-0	1-2	1	3		4	5	6	7	8	9[1]	10*	11	2		12										
Nov 16	A	Grimsby	6436	0-0	0-1	1	2		4	5	6	7	8	9	10*	11				12			3						
Nov 20	A	Spurs (MC)	28619	0-0	0-0	1	3		4	5	6	7*	8	9	10	11			2	12									
Nov 23	H	Sheffield Utd	17558	0-2	0-3	1	3		4	5	6		8	9	10*	11			2	7				12					
Nov 26	H	Spurs (MC)	28100	0-0	0-0†	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10*	11	12												
Dec 3	A	Bradford	4701	1-1	1-2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8[1]	9		11*	12									10			
Dec 7	A	Sunderland	17229	2-0	3-1	1	2		12	5	6	7[1]	8			11	4			9[1]			3			10[1]			
Dec 10	H	Spurs (MC)	26306	1-0	1-0	1	2		12	5[1]	6	7	8			11	4			9*			3			10			
Dec 14	H	Hull City	13596	0-0	1-1	1	2			5	6	7*	8		9	11	4						3			10[1]	12		
Dec 22	A	Carlisle	4225	0-0	1-0	1	2			5	6	7	8	9	10[1]	11	4		12				3						
Dec 26	H	Brighton	15265	1-1	1-2	1	3		4	5	6	7[1]	8	9	10*	11	2											12	
Dec 28	H	Shrewsbury	12302	1-0	4-0	1	3		4	5	6	7	8[1]		9[1]	11	2		12	10[2]									
Jan 1	A	Wimbledon	9025	2-0	3-1	1	3		4	5	6	7	8		9[2]	11[1]	2		12	10									
Jan 4	H	Aston Villa (FAC)	17732	0-1	2-2	1	3		4[1p]	5[1]	6	7*	8		9	11	2		12	10							7*		
Jan 11	H	Fulham	13666	0-1	1-1	1	3			5	6			12	9	11	8[1]		2	10		4							
Jan 13	A	Aston Villa (FAC)	14598	0-1	2-3†	1	2			5	6			12	9*	11	8		4[2(1p)]	10			3	7					
Jan 18	A	Norwich	20129	0-0	0-2		2		4	5		7	8		9	11	6		12	10			3						1
Jan 22	A	Oxford Utd (MC)	10334	0-2	1-3		2		4	5		7	8		9	11	6		12[1]	10			3*						1
Jan 25	H	Middlesbrough	10611	0-0	1-0		3		4	5	6	7	8	9[1]		11	2		12	10									1
Feb 1	H	Huddersfield Town	10936	1-0	4-1		3		4[1p]	5	6	7[1]	8	9[1]		11	2[1]		12	10									1
Feb 22	H	Oldham	10891	0-1	1-2		2	3	4	5		7	8	9		11[1]	6		12	10									1
Mar 1	A	Blackburn	4980	0-0	0-1	1		3	4	5		7	8	9	10*	11	6		2	12									
Mar 8	H	Barnsley	10426	1-1	1-1	1		3	4	5	6	7[1]	8	9	10*	11	2			12									
Mar 15	A	Charlton	10132	2-1	2-1	1	2	3		5	6	7[1]	8		10[1]*	11	4			12									9
Mar 25	H	Millwall	9570	2-1	2-1	1	2	3	12	5	6	7[1]	8		10	11	4												9[1]
Mar 29	H	Wimbledon	18859	0-0	1-1	1	2	3	12	5[1]	6	7	8		10	11	4*												9
Mar 31	A	Brighton	16640	3-0	3-2	1	2	3		5	6	7*	8	10		11[1]				12		4							9[2(1p)]
Apr 5	H	Leeds Utd	14430	1-0	2-3	1	2	3		5[2]	6	7	8	12	10*	11						4							9
Apr 8	A	Crystal Palace	11731	0-2	1-2	1	2			5	6	7*	8		10	11				12		4		3					9
Apr 12	A	Middlesbrough	7160	0-0	0-1	1	3			5	6	7	8	10*		11				12		2			4				9
Apr 19	H	Grimsby Town	12967	0-0	3-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		10*	11[1]									12[1]				9[1]
Apr 22	A	Stoke	8529	0-1	0-2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		10*	11									12				9
Apr 26	A	Sheffield Utd	12234	0-0	0-0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		10	11*				12									9
May 3	H	Bradford	9568	1-0	4-0	1	2	3	4[1p]	5	6		8	10						7[1]				12		11			9[2]

Own goals: Jones (Huddersfield) Aug 27
Gray (Crystal Palace) Apr 8

* denotes substituted

† after extra time

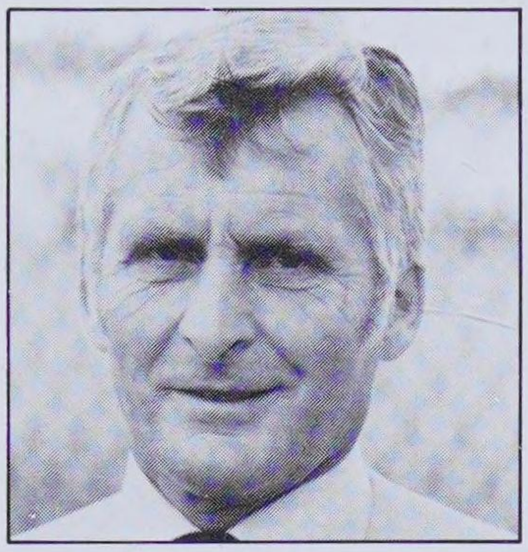
FAC — FA Cup FMC — Full Members' Cup MC — Milk Cup

League appearances		38	39	21	30	42	36	39	39	28	34	41	23	1	4	10	1	9	0	6	2	3	1	4	11
League goals*		0	0	1	6	4	0	11	2	14	6	7	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	6
FA Cup appearances		2	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
FA Cup goals		0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milk Cup appearances		6	5	2	6	7	6	7	5	5	4	7	5	0	2	4	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	1	0
Milk Cup goals		0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Full Members Cup appearances		2	2	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full Members Cup goals		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(As substitute)	League	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	2	15[1]	-	-	-	1	3	-	2	-	-
	FA Cup	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Milk Cup	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1[1]	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
	Full Members Cup	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

* Goals include goals scored when sub. In sub. table, indices denote goals scored as sub.

All right. I surrender. Paul Jones submits to Vince Hilaire's citizen's arrest

The Authors



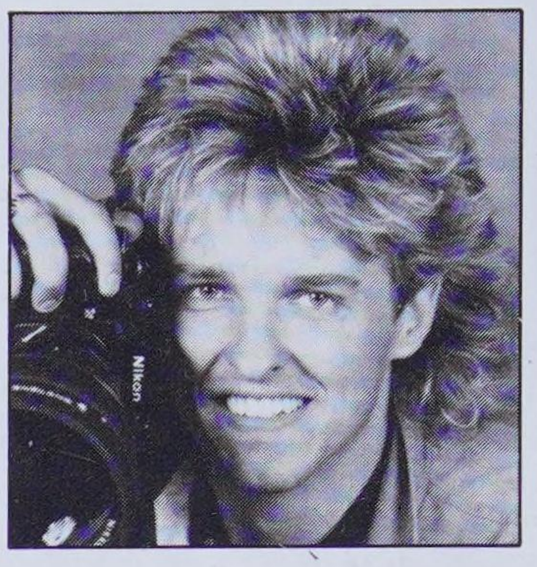
MIKE NEASOM has been interested in football for more seasons than he cares to remember.

He has covered Pompey for the past eleven years as chief sports writer for *The News* and *Sports Mail* and is a widely respected sports journalist.

Having watched his first match at Fratton Park in the late 1940's, he has been a staunch follower of the team's fortunes ever since.

He is a joint author of POMPEY. THE HISTORY OF PORTSMOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB which has received widespread acclaim.

A keen follower of all sports, especially cricket, Mike lives in Havant with his wife and two sons.



MURRAY SANDERS has always been interested in football and has played Sunday League in the Portsmouth area for the past ten years.

A lover of all sport, he keeps fit at squash and has a keen interest in modern sports cars.

He has been a photographer with *The News* for seven years and covered his first Pompey match in 1978. Since that time he has taken thousands of match shots and his photographs appear regularly in *The News* and *Sports Mail*.

His assignments in recent years include the Royal Wedding, Cowes Week, Wimbledon, International Football and Live Aid at Wembley.

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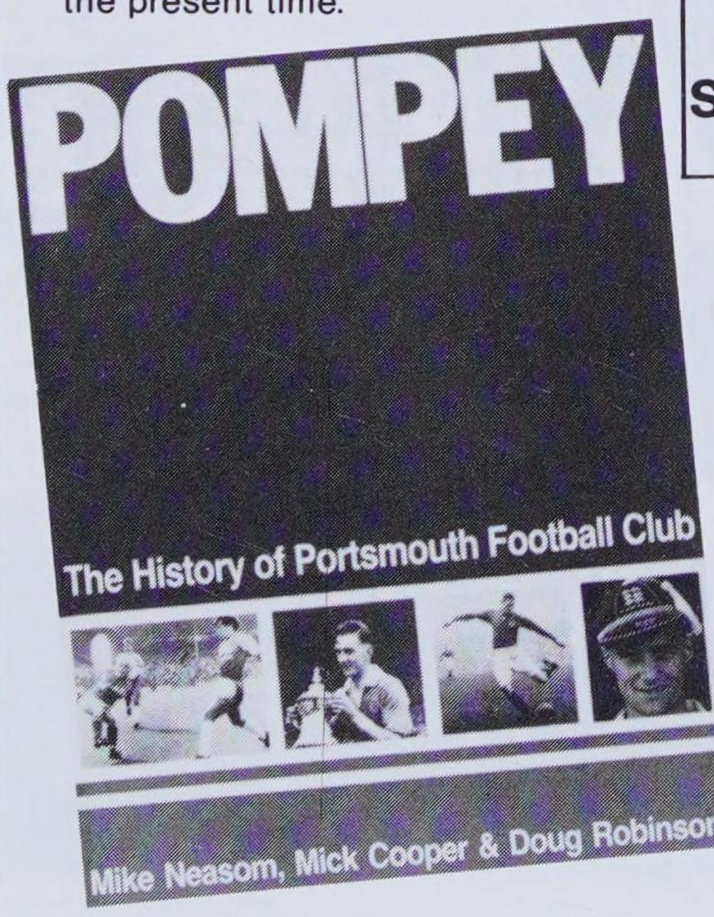

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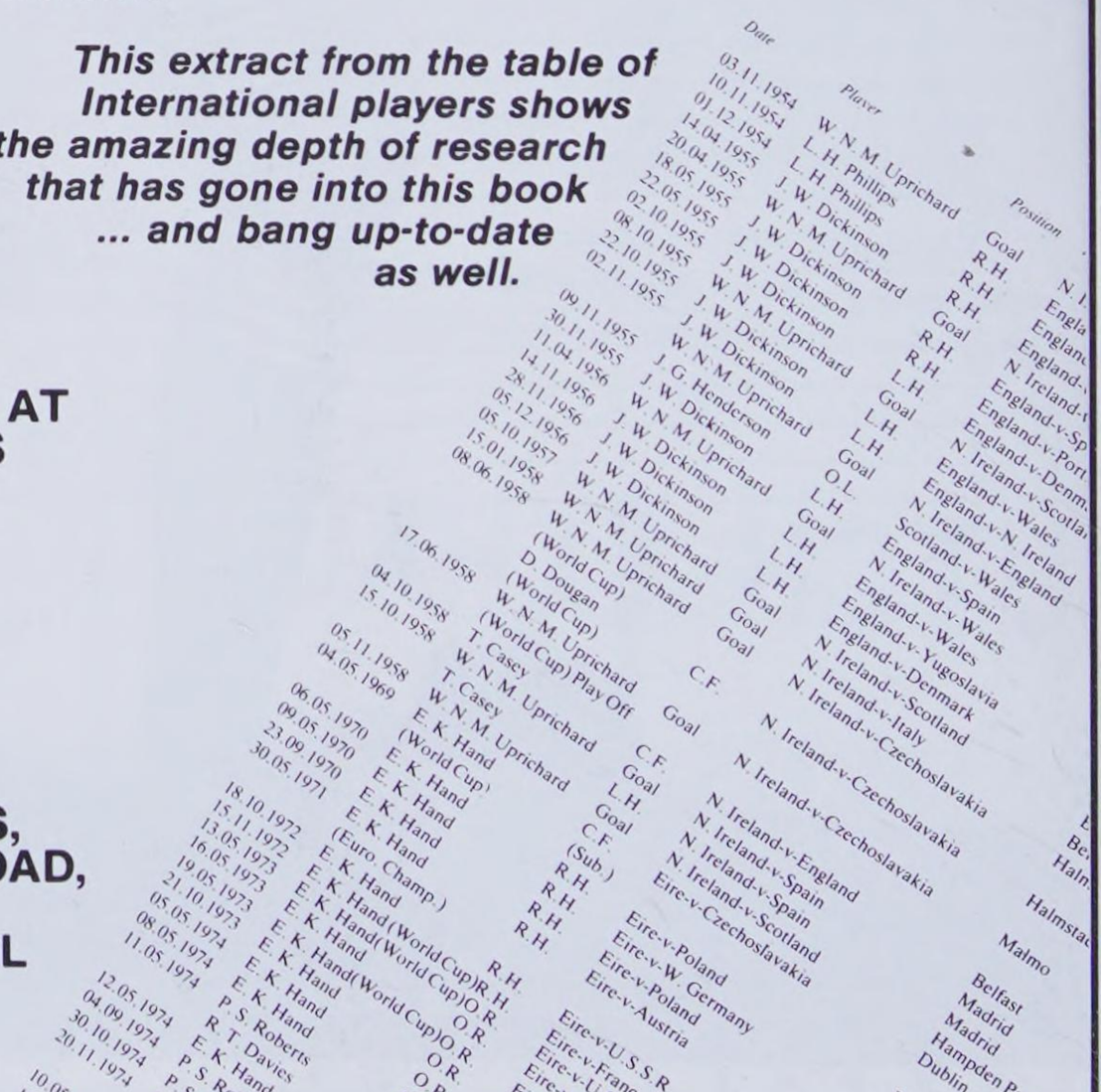

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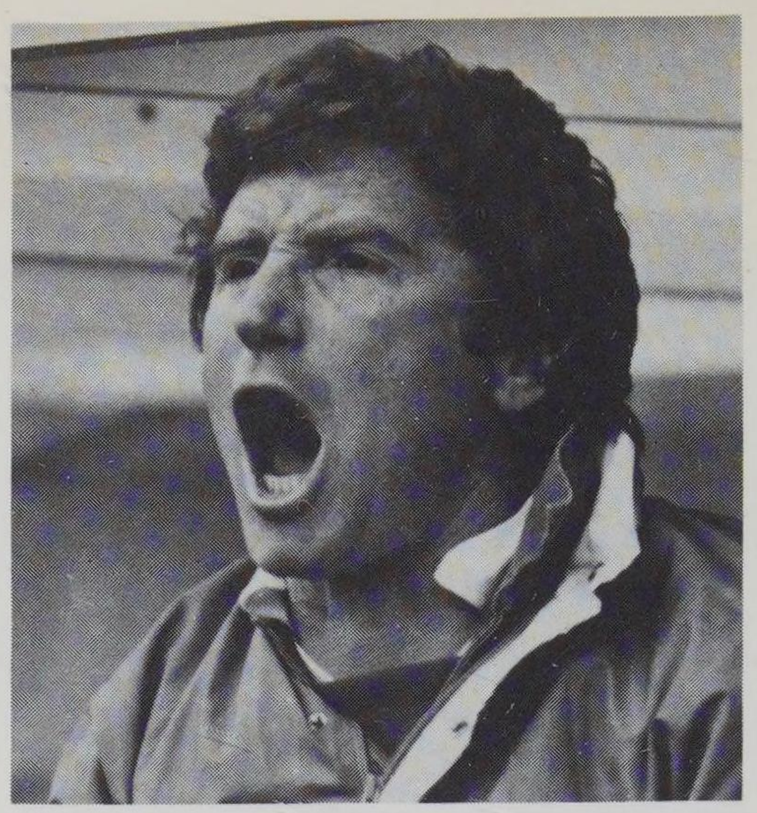

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